



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

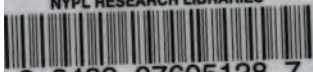
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES

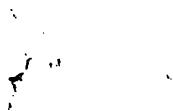


3 3433 07605128 7

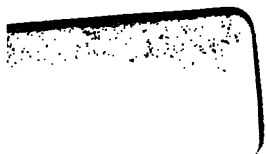
arnate



David Malcolm



Misc
Material

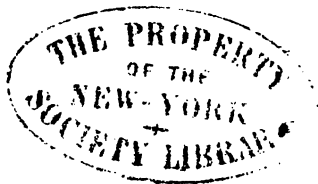


A FIEND INCARNATE

BY

DAVID MALCOLM

Author of "Fifty Thousand Dollars Ransom"



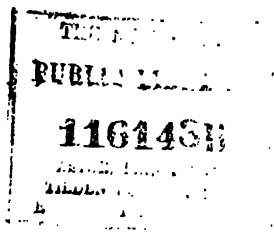
NEW YORK

J. SELWIN TAIT & SONS

65 FIFTH AVENUE

GD

c1895



COPYRIGHT, 1895, BY
J. SELWIN TAIT & SONS.

All Rights Reserved.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—ON THE TRAIL OF THE FORGER,	5
II.—THE PANIC OF 1866, . . .	25
III.—IN THE BANK OF ENGLAND, .	32
IV.—THE BANKER'S DISAPPEARANCE,	43
V.—PUTNAM, THE DETECTIVE'S, STORY,	55
VI.—FRESH REVELATIONS, . . .	63
VII.—THE MIDNIGHT SEARCH, . .	90
VIII.—SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS—THE ANACONDA,	105
IX.—THE DISCOVERY AT THE POND,	121
X.—GIUSEPPE PORDENONE, . . .	141
XI.—THE ATTEMPTED CAPTURE, .	163
XII.—THE END,	186





PREFATORY NOTE.

ALTHOUGH I only claim the suffrages of the reader for "A Fiend Incarnate" as a work of fiction, I would so far encourage its perusal as to say that the story is founded on fact, and that each character is an actual portrait from life. All the great masters of fiction have recognized that the novel, unlike the press and other records of actual events, is limited to the narration of the probable. In dealing with a man like Pordenone this *dictum* naturally prevents me from doing full justice to him. I would therefore say that, while the real arch-conspirator Pordenone did not do *everything* here narrated, the majority of these misdeeds are fairly chargeable to him, and he actually did many other things which were more remarkable but too improbable to be introduced into fiction. No work of this kind could possibly do full justice to the

amazing hardihood, versatility, and absolute genius of the original Pordenone. He crossed my path from time to time for fully twenty years, and to the casual onlooker it seemed doubtful whether in that entire period he ever willingly committed a single act conformable to the dictates of the law. Inconceivably ugly and yet irresistibly fascinating, he was a mass of contradictions, and it was perhaps this peculiarity which made him rather an interesting personality than the revolting creature which every one knew him to be in reality.

He did not perish in the way which poetic justice has demanded in these pages. It is, indeed, quite possible that he is still living; and if by any chance his eyes should read my description of him, there is no doubt that he will be the first to recognize the faithfulness of the portrait drawn by my pen.

THE AUTHOR.



A FIEND INCARNATE.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE TRAIL OF THE FORGER.

UPSTAIRS in the public office the great white-faced dial pointed to half-past four o'clock, and the clerks were closing their books for the day. The establishment was a West End London bank, of which I, Allan Graham, was one of the paying tellers or cashiers as they are locally termed. By a run of exceptional circumstances in my favor, I had been elevated to that position years before "due date," to use the jargon of the discount department. I was barely twenty at the time, and still youthful enough to feel a sense of relief when my cash came right first trial, at the end of the day's work.

When the clock chimed the half-hour

I was standing in the strongroom in the basement waiting with some impatience for the bank porter to bring down my cash. I had opened the great iron safe inside the vault, preparatory to placing my cash within it, and stood leaning heavily on its massive door, when a step, which I knew was not that of the porter, caused me to turn. The manager of the bank advanced into the light of the solitary gas-jet, which indicated, but scarcely illuminated, the rows of plate-chests, deed-boxes, and other depositories which lined the walls of the vault.

"You are waiting for Hanley, Mr. Graham," he remarked. "I have sent him out for a few minutes as I wish to have a little undisturbed conversation with you."

There was an air of constraint in the tone which caused me some surprise. Of all men that I had met up to that time—of all men I have ever met, I can truthfully add now—Mr. Fitzgerald, the gentleman who stood before me, preserved in every circumstance of life the most undisturbed demeanor, and the most tranquil voice. I suppose it was the stillness of the vault which en-

J. G. V. N.

abled me to detect the change in his manner, while the fact of the change itself, so unusual in my experience of him, caused me to regard the manager very carefully.

As I recall the scene, the close air of the bank-vault comes back to my nostrils from the past of thirty years ago, and through the open doorway I can still hear the subdued shuffling of the feet of the clerks as they hurried their books together and arranged for closing the office for the day.

For a short space the silence between us was unbroken, and my interrogating gaze was baffled by the strangely intent and distant look in the manager's handsome eyes.

Mr. Fitzgerald was a tall, military-looking man, of commanding and yet exceedingly winning appearance. But for one or two slight shortcomings then unknown, he might have posed as the beau ideal of a London bank manager. Thoroughly acquainted with his business, and with all the ethics of finance; familiar with the professions, and learned in all the intricacies of trade; possessed of a stately presence and easy and dignified manner, he seemed armed

at all points, and the very Admirable Crichton of banking. We had a Diogenes on our staff, who vainly tried to depreciate our great man, for all of us liked him.

"Just look at him," he would say; "he will shake hands gushingly with Jones with a beam which carries the poor man nearly off his feet; and when Jones, 'captured, horse, foot and dragoons,' gushes back, a stony look of inattention will be seen in Fitzgerald's eyes, and before Jones has faltered to the end of his unhappy tale the other will be enrapturing some one else. Oh, yes, indeed he is a great man," sneered Diogenes, who, I recollect, was disgracefully humble in his own demeanor before the chief.

The manager, on entering the strong-room, carried the bank bill-case in his hand I noticed, and thinking he wished to lock it up I picked out the special key, for combination locks were not in vogue in England, and neither of us could open the inner safe without the other. It was a rule of the bank that the manager and teller should hold distinct keys, both of which were necessary in order to gain access to the safe.

I paused with the key in my hand as I noticed that Mr. Fitzgerald was running his fingers through the bills of exchange, and for the first time I remarked an exceedingly handsome gold pin in his necktie, containing his likeness in profile cut in cameo. The cameo was exquisitely engraved and the likeness a speaking one. "How do you like my cameo?" inquired the manager, suddenly looking up with something of the old smile in his eyes. I felt annoyed that I should have displayed any curiosity, and merely smiled in return.

"How do you like it?" he repeated, taking the pin from his scarf and handing it to me for inspection.

"It is a good likeness, and very well cut," I replied.

"That is Antonio Barbati's work," he added.

Barbati was an Italian cameo-worker, and I had noticed that he and two of his countrymen had had frequent interviews with the manager of late. They were known to me slightly in the way of business. I had cashed one or two checks for them, and I was also familiar with their signatures.

"By the way, do you know Giuseppe

Pordenone by sight?" inquired the manager as he replaced the pin. Pordenone was one of those three Italians, a hangdog-looking Neapolitan, with a hideous vulpine face.

"I have asked all the others, and none of them appears to have noticed him here."

"Yes, I should recognize him anywhere," I replied.

The manager paused a moment; and for want of anything better to think about, I fell to wondering how Barbati's thick, hairy fingers could possibly have done such exquisite work.

"These are forgeries," said the manager presently, in an even unexcited tone, handing me two bills drawn by Pordenone upon two highly respectable houses, known to me only by name.

"The acceptors' signatures?" I inquired.

"Yes."

The sound of the porter's steps was now heard on the stone stairs, and Mr. Fitzgerald added: "You are the only one in the office who knows Pordenone by sight. Will you identify him to a detective to-night at the Café Gatti?"

I willingly assented, and appointed 7.30 as the hour to meet the detective.

As I left the office for my apartments on Regent's Park, the air felt sultry and close for a May day. Great banks of black clouds rose in the west and a spiral column, suggestive of a water-spout, stood out against the sky far away to the south.

"A storm," I mentally ejaculated. Then I stood still to feast my eyes on the delicate green of the spring foliage along the canal banks and in the park. I was country born and country bred, and the freshness of a London spring, unapproachable all the wide world over until stained by the smoke and veiled by the dust, always touched the softest chords of my heart. For a few minutes I stood regaling myself with the sight, and listening to an imprisoned lark that near by was pouring out its whole soul in song.

Turning to go, I saw one of these fleet-footed young Mercuries of the street, a newsboy, tearing along toward the Lion's Head, a famous hostlery, where all the local omnibuses stopped, and where the pedestrians of six leading thoroughfares met.

My particular Mercury had a bundle of papers in his hand and was shouting as he ran, "Failure of Overend, Gurney & Company," a cry which made that day memorable for evermore, as the Black Friday of May, 1866. It was to me the earliest announcement of a circumstance which in itself and its influences affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of human beings, and it ushered in a panic the like of which has hardly been known in European or American experience.

Punctually at 7.30 P.M., as arranged, I met the detective, who was personally known to me, at the Café Gatti. As we walked slowly through the café we could hear excited references to the great failure of the day, and some of the elder Italians present wore anxious, harassed looks. After walking through the great establishment several times, and having thoroughly explored the private room, the billiard saloon, and the central pavilion, we regaled ourselves with some coffee, and after selecting our seats so as to command a view of the entrance, essayed a game of dominoes.

At eleven o'clock we left, satisfied that Pordenone had either scented dan-

ger or had gone elsewhere that evening. After all, the probability that he would be there had not been very strong. It was the most likely place, that was all.

It had been very wet while we were indoors, and was raining slightly as we left the café. In trying to avoid being splashed by a hansom cab that drew up suddenly and recklessly to the curb, I collided with the detective. Glancing up angrily at the careless driver, I received a shock of agreeable surprise to see the object of our search preparing to alight from the cab. "Putnam," I whispered to the detective under cover of his umbrella, "this is your man." Pordenone had turned round to pay the cabman.

"Mr. Pordenone, I believe," said the detective, with a smile.

"Yes, that is my name," was the reply, with a truculent look.

When the warrant was served the detective signalled the driver of the cab to wait. He had not yet left, but was grinningly enjoying the scene after the manner of his kind.

"Well, any way, let me buy a cigar first, and I will go quietly," muttered Pordenone.

"I've no objection," said the detective, taking his arm for greater safety. The nearest cigar store was situated round the corner in a dark and somewhat unfrequented street.

As Putnam released his hold for Pordenone to enter the store, the latter, with the rapidity of lightning, swung him round with one hand, while with the other he drew a long, deadly looking stiletto. I was standing about six feet away at the moment, holding my closed silk umbrella in my right hand.

I was thunderstruck, and it was more a natural impulse than any presence of mind which made me launch out my umbrella to ward off the blow. At the moment of striking, Pordenone had ducked his head, in the common Italian way. The straight rapierlike thrust of the fine-pointed ferule got home quicker than the semi-circular blow of the knife. My weapon struck Pordenone full on the head and seemed to stick there, catching the descending blow of the would-be assassin and averting it.

With a yell of mingled rage and pain, Pordenone threw his hands to his head

and the long gleaming blade rattled on the granite pavement at our feet.

I felt horrified, my impression being that I had put out one of his eyes. The detective, who now regained his hold, dragged the wretched man into the light of the store, where we saw that the blood was pouring from a great scar in his ear, the umbrella's sharp point having gone through the ear and made a flesh wound in the head behind. The cut given by me had been aggravated by the downward sweep of Pordenone's arm which my umbrella had caught while buried in his ear, and its vicious force had torn the ear very badly. The wound needed proper attention, and we conducted our prisoner into the store.

I shuddered as the steel of the knife rang against the pavement. I had never before seen a weapon of that kind drawn with bad intent, and it seemed as if I were being dragged near to the edge of a tragedy.

The chemist into whose store we took Pordenone examined the wound, and as the hemorrhage was still very considerable he removed the prisoner's coat and vest. In doing so a roll of bills fell from an inside pocket of the

former, which Pordenone, now in the grasp of the assistant, made a desperate effort to regain.

"Hold still, sir," said the latter, forcibly holding his head, under the impression that he was wincing at the sight of the needle. "Hold still, sir; I shan't be a minute," added the chemist himself.

In the mean time Putnam the detective had quietly risen and appropriated the bills, remarking, "I may as well take care of these; you will be searched at the station-house, any way."

"What a hangdog-looking ruffian he is!" said the detective in a low tone, attentively regarding Pordenone, who, now that the blood was stanching, was alternately scowling and writhing under the needle of the operator.

"Those men who are so ready with the knife are afraid of the needle," he said and smiled.

On leaving the store Pordenone complained of feeling very sick from loss of blood, and asked to be allowed to get a little brandy. This seemed reasonable enough to me, but the detective hesitated a minute, reflecting that we were now in the Italian district, and that a rescue might be attempted.

"I'll chance it, any way," I heard him mutter, and he opened the folding-doors of a saloon, and dragged in with him the prisoner, whom he had now handcuffed, and who certainly looked ghastly enough to justify his request.

I had thought that Pordenone would endeavor to hide his handcuffs, instead of which he placed his hands upon the open counter. With an angry expression, the suspicious detective elbowed them out of sight.

In my inexperience of such things I was following events very slowly, but still I experienced a feeling of vast uneasiness, which was much increased when I saw the vicious gleam in the eyes of the attendant at the next counter as she saw the handcuffs.

Passing quickly through the intervening door so as to front her department, I said, "Give me a cigar, please."

"What kind—mild or strong?" she inquired, with a marked Italian accent; and without waiting for a reply, she dashed with ill-disguised haste through the opposite doorway, giving, it seemed to me, a glance of intelligence to the reflected image of Pordenone in the mirror which lined the wall.

I imagined that Pordenone's sombre visage responded with a signal, but the whole affair passed so suddenly, and I felt so entirely at sea among such neighbors, that everything seemed indistinct, and nothing positive save the impression that it was necessary for our safety that we should leave that place at once.

The detective and I had exchanged fears. He was now enjoying a glass of brandy, and rather resented my expression of uneasiness.

"No hurry," he replied; "that man looks very shaky still."

"Well, but he can have proper attendance at the station-house."

"Let us go, then," he at last said, somewhat out of humor.

I had determined to take a cab the moment we got outside, but our Jehu had not waited and none could be seen, and before we had gone fifty yards a perfect hurricane of rain came on, obliging us to take hasty refuge under an archway connected with a livery stable then vacant.

The archway was badly lit, even at the entrance, while at the rear it was wrapped in utter blackness. I tried to

pierce the darkness behind me, but in vain; and then in a desultory way began to regard the dripping figures that hurried past the entrance. Pordenone, I noticed, had placed his face in the best available light so as the more readily to be seen from the street, and his handcuffs were prominently exposed. I pointed out these facts to the detective, upon whom I could see the brandy was having the worst effect. Had it been drugged?

"Why, you are as suspicious as an old maid," he remarked, laughing stupidly and sleepily.

At that moment a peculiar whistle sounded in the rear of the archway, and in a few seconds was answered from some point in front.

"Signal for help," I shouted, moved by an inexplicable and uncontrollable impulse. Impressed, I presume, by the sudden earnestness in my voice, Putnam raised his whistle to his lips. As he did so, Pordenone with savage energy flung himself clear, and struck at the detective savagely with his manacled hands. Every nerve in my body was at fullest tension, and I threw myself headlong upon Pordenone, trust-

ing to my old border wrestling skill and my subsequent training in the German Turnverein at King's Cross to bring me out all right. But I had reckoned without my host. As I clasped that ill-shaped figure I seemed to become suddenly conscious that I had "not wisely but too well" embraced an anaconda of the Amazon. The ribs of this extraordinary creature, for man I could scarcely imagine it, seemed like circular bars of steel; short ribs and waist there were none, he was hooped like a brandy cask for the full length of his body.

I had been too late after all, for with his fiendish quickness he had felled the detective to the ground before I could prevent it, and the alarm whistle for rescue had been unsounded. There Putnam lay, ghastly and still in the glimmering light, with his whistle lying by his side.

How to reach it? For I fancied already I heard hurrying feet. Should I let him go and sound the whistle? No, ten thousand times, no! Life was dear, but not quite so dear as that. And, setting my teeth, I let go my very useless waisthold, and seizing Porde-

none by the collar, I threw him violently to the right, kicking his feet quickly from under him in the opposite direction at the same time. It was a simple old Cumberland trick, and it was perfectly successful. Down he went headlong, dragging me with him however, for his fingers held a deathlike grip on my throat, handcuffed though his hands were. His head struck the rough stonework of the archway as he fell, and as insensibility overtook him he released his hold.

To free myself and seize the detective's whistle and blow it until I was exhausted seemed a long work. In reality it did not last thirty seconds. I was still kneeling by the detective's side, as the whistle was attached to his person, when the sound of steps in the rear of the archway and in front caused me to bound to my feet. Well could I distinguish that muffled rush from the ponderous thud of the brogans of our grand metropolitan police force.

A hasty glance around showed me Pordenone rising to an all-four position, two of the figures rushing into the archway, and a movement in the rear against the clearing skies. There was no sign

of a revolver in the detective's belt. The same look showed me a wagon drawn in under cover of the archway, and filled with coals.

As I was a pretty fair cricketer, this revealed endless possibilities, and with three bounds I was standing on the top of the load, balancing two very comfortable lumps of the black mineral in my hand.

From my elevation I could see Pordenone crawling on his hands and knees to the detective's side. I thought he meant to kill him; now, however, I imagine it was to recover the bills.

Balancing myself on the shelving heap of coal, and swinging my right arm in a wide semi-circle from my shoulder, I delivered the full round-arm shot which our cricketing eleven made a specialty of. Two pounds of coal *en bloc* delivered vigorously "roundhand" at thirty feet is a persuasive argument, and even Pordenone's ironbound *torso* admitted it when he received the precious consignment right between the shoulder-blades. With a groan, grateful beyond measure to my ears, he again fell over insensible.

Meantime my intending assailants

had rushed in upon me. Fortunately the wagon on which I stood was so near to the wall that they could not surround me without danger to themselves. It is needless to dwell upon the furious attack and the desperate defence. Twice the points of the ruffians' knives penetrated my clothes, slightly gashing my limbs, and as often I drove back the enemy bleeding from well-directed missiles. Then, amid the whirlwind of the fight, I saw a helmet leap into the opening, and the next moment a policeman's rattle resounded through the archway and woke up the adjacent streets.

It was like the cry of "A sail!" to a shipwrecked and famishing crew.

The policeman came on at a run, but the swarthy marauders dispersed before him as beetles make off into the night. In a moment they were gone, and only the slowly recovering detective remained in the place.

Before I had well gained the ground there were four policemen in the archway, but their arrival was all too late.

Shortly afterward I bade the detective good night. We were both somewhat sorrowful and crestfallen. Our

prisoner had escaped, the detective's head was cut open, and I had some unpleasant mementos of the conflict on my own person.

"Glad you've got those bills, Putnam," expressed all the comfort which the situation afforded me personally.

"Yes, thank heaven!" was the brief response.





CHAPTER II.

THE PANIC OF 1866.

ON my way to the bank the following morning, I saw in the newspapers the full account of the Overend-Gurney failure.

I briefly explained to the manager the result of our attempt to capture Pordenone. My explanation was his first intimation of the result of my visit to the Café Gatti.

London reporters are not ubiquitous, like those of New York, and London policemen are not as a rule garrulous. Moreover, in this instance they had nothing to tell.

"Well, it's a pity, but it can't be helped," was Mr. Fitzgerald's comment. "By the way, you were rather badly handled, then, were you not?"

"Oh, no, nothing to complain of very much."

Mr. Fitzgerald was more unsettled than I had ever seen him before. His

glance continually wandered to the rival institution across the way. He had no love for that bank whose fierce opposition had compelled him to cater for business which his caution would otherwise have left alone. He was wondering, I think, what its directors would do in the face of a panic. At last he approached me.

"Mr. Graham, I don't know whether yesterday's panic will be renewed in the city to-day, but it may be, and it may also extend to us. I can rely upon you. I don't like to take you from your work, but I wish you to go into the chief office in Lombard street and request the general manager to send me what aid in cash he deems proper in view of the circumstances. You can explain just how things are here; but it is of less importance how we are than how the chief office itself is weathering the storm."

"Are there any heavy balances, sir, which ought to be specially provided for? I received twenty thousand pounds across the counter a few days ago from Thomas Clarke. Has he drawn that out through the clearing-house this morning?"

Thomas Clarke was a betting man, and his checks were usually presented across the counter for cash. His kind are at all times a troublesome class of customers for a banker to have, as likely to upset his estimate of the average cash required for his till.

The two ledger clerks were called and asked to produce their nightly balance-sheets. These showed in the aggregate an abnormal balance of about forty thousand pounds on five separate accounts which ought to be specially provided for. That amount and ten thousand additional would be ample to start with, as we were only thirty minutes from the chief office by rail. The rest of our current accounts were in ordinary form, and our fixed deposits were subject to thirty days' notice of withdrawal.

There were some trustee accounts about which the manager felt uneasy, as the amounts might all be withdrawn at once. But, as stated, help was near if we required to avail ourselves of it.

I jumped into a hansom cab; and being young and personally intangible to the lugubrious influences of a panic, I

enjoyed the drive in the brisk morning air in the smoothly rolling cab.

Driving down Cheapside, I presently became conscious of a mighty change from the normal condition of affairs. The horse, which had changed from a swift to a slow canter, now adopted a walk, and even that was maintained with difficulty. Wedged in the narrow streetway were thousands of excited men moving in and out with wild gestures and speaking in loud, excited tones.

As we laboriously neared the Bank of England, plowing our way through this human field, the mass became more compact and less penetrable, and at the corner opposite to the Mansion House I was compelled to dismiss my charioteer.

As I stood on the step of the hansom I could see from my elevation a sight which, once seen, could never be forgotten. In Threadneedle street, Union street, and King William street there was a pavement of human heads, as close and compact as the stones in a granite pavement.

After a mighty wrestling with the crowd, I at last stood within the folding-doors of the head office of the bank

which I represented. All was quiet there. The bank had only moved its head office lately into the city—or downtown as it would be termed in America—from the West End, and had not yet sufficient city connection to make it very apprehensive of a run upon its resources; for then, as now, it was noticeable that panics at the outset did not greatly extend beyond Lombard street and its vicinity.

After hasty greetings, I explained the object of my visit, and showed my reasons, in the shape of the extract from the bank's books, for making a demand upon them for additional cash.

While the cash was being prepared, a little knot of us stood in the upper gallery of the bank observing the crowd below.

"They are watching the A—— Bank to see how long it can hold out. The B. & C. has had a terrible time since it opened, and it is still packed with excited people." This was by way of explanation to me.

To and fro in narrow Lombard street the crowd swayed and turned. Hundreds of people who had no direct interest in the panic swelled the surging

crowds, but on all sides were pallid cheeks and straining eyes.

From the several banks distrusted by the crowd, depositors came out by twos and threes, their faces lit up by a fearful joy—they had got their money, but how to keep it! Pickpockets were already in the street, reaping a glorious harvest, for indeed a child could tell who had his deposit about him by the various emotions which swept across his face, and by the restless hands every now and again clutching at the hidden treasure.

The banks which were endangered were no minnows in that commercial sea—in any other company they would have been monsters. Their deposits ran from fifteen to fifty millions of dollars and upwards.

The day was a crucial test of the public opinion of the respective banks. Up to that time the London and Westminster Bank and the Union Bank of London had run a neck-to-neck race; but during that and subsequent days the former surged twenty-five million dollars ahead in its deposits, and has during all these long subsequent years kept and improved its lead.

What was the cause of the panic?

Many reasons might be given as assisting in the development of a crisis at that time, but probably the recent introduction of the Limited Liability Act, which had given an enormous and unhealthful impetus to trade by the formation of new business enterprises representing hundreds of millions of pounds, had more to do with it than anything else. New banks had sprung into life to handle the mushroom business thus created; and, in the general rush of competition, bank managers had grown careless—mad, indeed, some of their directors thought, when in solemn conclave they went that afternoon through the bills of exchange which formed their staple assets.

The "Old Lady of Threadneedle street," the Bank of England, was as grim and gray as ever that turbulent morning, and yet anxious bankers, wistfully regarding her, thought her face beautiful as the houri of Paradise, since she was their only hope in that hour of sore straits.

What a harvest of golden rain she showered around her! The rustling of her bank-notes was like the sound of autumn leaves in Valambrosa.



CHAPTER III.

IN THE BANK OF ENGLAND.

THERE was no time, however, for longer study of the panorama of human emotion which was unrolling itself in such startling colors before us, and I left for the Bank of England to obtain the amount in bank-notes which I required for our needs.

The traffic which was flowing in continually growing volume through the massive portals of the bank—across its sounding courtyard and past its wooden-eyed porters in their stiff old-world livery and cocked hats—was unusual in character as well as in quantity.

This was no fifth of April or October, with its crowd of spinsters in corkscrew curls, and of elderly gentlemen of immaculate and venerable appearance, come to draw the dividends on their Government stock. Nor did the crowd represent, on the other hand, merely the ebb and flow of the bank's staid and

middle-aged *clientèle*. Its customers were not, as a matter of fact, conspicuous in its corridors that day. Ordinary business was impossible; and as they had little anxiety about their deposits, they were chiefly noticeable by their absence on the streets.

There was lacking, too, the assortment of liveries usually discernible there—the black and blue and green and claret-colored uniforms of the porters—or messengers as they are termed—of the different banks. The business in course of transaction between Lombard street and the Bank of England was of too weighty a character to be entrusted to bank messengers, and the great coming and going was of men who understood the significance of the hour, and who were themselves the substitutes of high officials of other banks, who would—had they dared to be seen in such a place on that day—fain have gone themselves as some relief to their terrible uneasiness.

Although every face bore in a greater or lesser degree the evidence of excitement, it was not of the acutely distressing kind discernible outside. The tremendous difference consisted in

this—these men had no direct personal interest in the panic; they were like hired mourners at a funeral, mere deputies of grief and alarm; and the difference between their excitement and the consternation outside was very real and apparent.

Within the bankers' department of the Bank of England the restraint and quiet usually observable were thrown to the winds, and the gold lace on the hat of the stalwart, rotund, and soulless porter at the entrance bristled at the outrage done to the unviolated decorum of centuries.

This inner sanctum was, so to speak, the barometer which recorded the pressure of the financial atmosphere outside, and when the officials of the various banks recognized each other, instead of finding relief in the suggestion of a community of misfortune, they seemed to be seized with a twofold alarm—first that the panic was so universal as to bring every institution down, and, in the next place, that the demands of the others would exhaust the bank's supply of cash before their turn came.

At ordinary times the members of

this small but important crowd would have been the pink of courtesy toward each other, but in that hour the teachings of Lord Chesterfield were forgotten, as they are apt to be in financial, as well as in physical, convulsions.

Compared with the apparent necessities and demands of the others, my own seemed so slight that I felt that I really had no right to elbow my way to the front, and without making any effort I looked on for a while with wondering eyes.

"Give me a hundred thousand pounds for the B. & C. Bank," was the first intelligible demand I heard. The tone of the voice arrested my attention, not because of its loudness, but because the words came with a certain air of suppression which lent almost a hiss to the utterance.

"That is the third demand for a hundred thousand made this morning by the B. & C.," said a low voice in my ear. "Three hundred thousand pounds since nine o'clock, and it's now only eleven!"

Meantime a call for fifty thousand pounds from the Bank of London could be heard above the din as it overlapped

the first order in mid air. There was an urgency about it that was remarkable even amid the excitement, and subsequent events warranted it, for, notwithstanding the \$250,000 of cash, that bank closed its doors for good that day, a perfectly solvent concern which simply went down before an insane, indiscriminating rush.

The banks which came through the panic successfully received an unwritten diploma honored by all subsequent years. That day tried them as by fire, and just in the order in which they emerged from the ordeal, so have they stood since in public estimation. The B. & C. bank, whose branch establishments numbered over one hundred, was assailed for three brief, terrible hours, because it was doubted if its resources could cover so extended a front. Prudent and experienced men, however, were at its head, and the half-dozen paying-tellers in its Lombard street office turned no man away unsatisfied, with the result that in subsequent years it added more than fifty millions of dollars to its standing assets. The statements recorded here concerning the panic represent plain, unvarnished facts.

In time my needs were attended to, and I left the Bank of England in full possession of its unwonted tumult.

In Moorgate street, somewhat out of the crowd, I took a fresh hansom, and, in company with a banking client, a shipbuilder who lived in the neighborhood of our bank, I drove westward. In moving diagonally through the narrow streets between the northwestern corner of the Bank of England and Saint Paul's Cathedral, in order to avoid the city crowd which was growing worse as the people came in from the suburbs and the country, I suddenly spied, in rounding a corner, the slouching form and evil face of Pordenone. In response to a peremptory signal to stop, the driver pulled his horse up sharply; but with the unexpected action his vehicle became entangled with another cab crossing at right angles, and when at last I was able to start in pursuit I could discover no trace of Pordenone.

"What was it?" inquired my friend as I reentered the hansom.

"Only a man named Pordenone whom I wished to give into custody."

"Pordenone! an Italian?"

"Yes."

My friend was silent for a moment, and then asked in a low tone if the Italian's Christian name was Giuseppe. On being informed that it was, he inquired what the man had done that he should be arrested.

"Well, he has committed forgery, and has tried to commit murder."

The shipbuilder's face seemed to grow hard and gray, and as he apparently had a good deal to think about, the rest of our journey was performed in silence.

In our West-End bank the day was exceptionally quiet. Mr. Fitzgerald wore an anxious look unusual to him, but his manner was stately, and his smile, if less frequent, was as bright as ever. At 3 P.M. he left to go to the chief office. Before going he said, "I shall probably be back before five; but if I am not here then, please sign the letters for me."

"By the way, you are looking fagged," he added; "when do you take your holidays?"

"In July."

And so we chatted for a few minutes. He was dressed, as usual, in a frock or Albert coat, over which he wore a light

spring overcoat. The latter was open, and above his closely-buttoned frock coat I noticed his cameo pin. In the daylight the cameo seemed to have a deathlike pallor, which had not been noticeable under the gaslight of the previous evening.

The likeness was certainly a very remarkable one. The artist, in order to show the poise of the handsome head to the best advantage, had portrayed the neck with the linen rolled back. The treatment was Byronic, and yet it recalled no thought of the great but erratic poet; on the contrary, the gruesome fancy which the cameo suggested was that of a man going to execution—with neck bared for the guillotine maybe.

It was certainly full time that I took a holiday to chase these morbid fancies from my brain.

In spite of his white hair, Mr. Fitzgerald was only forty-two years of age, and the contrast of the snowy locks and full dark eyes added to his general distinguished appearance. As he stood buttoning his fawn-colored gloves in the vestibule I thought I had never seen him look so well. The discovery of

Pordenone's villany and the excitement of the panic had, he said, quickened his pulse. "My pulse is one of the slowest in the world," he added with a smile.

Having still something to say I accompanied him outside, and I was glad afterward that I went. Nor is it even now, after this long interval of time, a matter of indifference to me. The recollection remains with me still as a consoling reflection.

The air was fresh and bracing, and only agreeably warm, although the sun was shining brightly.

Presently our conversation came to an end, the driver received his directions, the folding doors closed with their wonted snap, a parting smile glanced from the interior of the cab, and he was off—away forevermore out of my life.

Strange how faithfully we can recall each detail of the surroundings of a great sorrow or joy. Even now when memory travels back over the time-worn road, I can see that cabman's ruddy face, and whip ornamented with a bow of blue ribbon, an outside blind flapping in the wind, a small dog

threatening a schoolboy, and the usual stream of carriages. They are photographed on my brain, and the daguerreo-type is as clear to-day as it was thirty years go.

I turned to go into the office, wondering how it was that I had grown so to like this man. And yet there was nothing marvellous in it. I was alone in London and had cultivated no friendships. In the office, indeed, my swift promotion had only made enemies, and my special friendship with the manager had tended to foster the enmity. His personal magnetism accounted for the rest.

In about twenty minutes a messenger arrived with a pencilled note from Mr. Fitzgerald to the effect that he had forgotten an appointment made at the bank with Mr. Peach for 4.30 that afternoon, and that he would like that gentleman to wait for him if he was late.

The messenger handed me an exquisite bunch of freshly gathered violets, and on Mr. Fitzgerald's card pinned to the paper covering were the words, "your favorite flower." Such a gift from man to man would usually raise a smile, but the sender had certain

agreeable feminine ways which in no wise detracted from his manliness.

At 5.30 P.M. I signed the letters, as Mr. Fitzgerald had not returned.





CHAPTER IV.

THE BANKER'S DISAPPEARANCE.

ON arriving at the bank on Monday morning I found a note from Mrs. Fitzgerald, inquiring whether I knew of anything likely to call her husband out of town, as he had not returned. This note disturbed me very much, as I well knew that Mr. Fitzgerald would have telegraphed had he been in circumstances where that was possible. Where could he be?

On calling upon Mrs. Fitzgerald, I found that lady more self-possessed than I had expected. Her statuesque features wore a cold, wintry smile, which did not seem to be warmed or even thawed by much anxiety. I may have wronged her, but I thought her apprehension was a great deal less than my own.

As I was leaving she mooted a question which upset me a good deal; partly because I was still, and had been all the

morning, endeavoring in vain to stereotype some suitable phrase to meet it.

"Is there anything wrong in the bank?"

"Surely, madam," I exclaimed, with a feeling of irritation which I was at no pains to dissemble, "you ought to be the last person to introduce that question."

There was, I fancied, an air of slight disdain apparent in the lady's air—probably at my simplicity.

"I do not suspect anything," she added. "But what will the world think? What will my uncle, Mr. Hiram Brutenford, say about the disgrace to his family if anything is wrong?"

"That is a sorrow that will surely keep," I muttered, somewhat wrathfully, as I bowed myself out from her presence with undisguised relief.

Having obtained the manager's duplicate strongroom key from a neighboring branch, I began the day's work, but with a heavy heart, and with my mind a good deal exercised by the question whether I ought not at once to advise the chief office of Mr. Fitzgerald's absence. Still, I reflected, an apparently inexplicable absence is so easily to be ac-

counted for by some simple unthought-of occurrence. Only the week before a mishap of the kind had occurred to a friend and myself. We had been carried beyond our destination, and the last train that night had left us in an out-of-the-way country place where no conveyance was to be had, and no means of telegraphic communication existed.

The recollection of this occurrence, which had annoyed me at the time, was a source of great comfort to me now, and I delayed telegraphing to the head office, reassuring myself with the fact that Sunday was a *dies non* all through the small country towns, and that the additional intervening day lost, being a Sunday, did not count.

By two o'clock, however, the tension had become too great; and, relegating my duties to a subordinate, I left for the chief office, where I explained matters, omitting, however, any reference to Mrs. Fitzgerald's suspicions. The tidings I had to impart were received by the general manager with much surprise and concern, and the chief inspector accompanied me back. I had rather anticipated this, and was therefore prepared for his carefully

worded inquiry as to what I thought was the cause of the manager's absence.

"If Mr. Fitzgerald does not return to-night, I shall suspect foul play," was my reply, and it startled even myself, for my fears had not seemed so real until I had given utterance to them.

This opinion, I noticed, affected the composure of the inspector for a moment, but probably recalling his own long experience of what a missing financier usually meant, I could see him gently shaking his head.

"Mr. Graham," he at last said, with a stiff formal air, "you know how rare that kind of crime is in England, and how very unlikely it is that any such tragedy could take place without the presence of the body or some other clue leading to its discovery. Whatever our personal feeling may be, all of us owe a duty to the bank; and in the case of an official occupying a position of trust, who has been absent without notice two days, it is our bounden duty to ascertain whether or not there has been any embezzlement of the funds within the control of the missing man. Too much time has already been lost through a mistaken idea of loyalty to your friend.

This matter ought to have been reported at ten o'clock this morning. Put yourself in my place. Imagine me as suspecting the worst, and answer in advance the question you would expect me to put with reference to Mr. Fitzgerald's management."

I paused a moment before replying to the bank inspector, and for the first time in this most unhappy business I felt a degree of diffidence which was for the instant cruelly embarrassing. My faith in Mr. Fitzgerald's honor and my fealty to him were unshaken, but as I was about to answer impulsively there passed before my mental vision like a pallid spectre the recollection of Pordenone, and knowing well the man's deviltry I felt daunted lest by some means or other he should, by his Machiavellian wiles, have entangled Mr. Fitzgerald so that the latter, in the utter hopelessness of being able to right himself, had absconded or committed suicide. The lapse of faith, however, lasted but an instant, and both my intuitive confidence and my intelligence came to my aid at once.

Replying to the inspector's inquiry, I said the cash was correct. I was per-

sonally responsible for that, and no one, not even the manager, could obtain access to it without my knowledge and assistance. He waved his hand with a suspicion of impatience, as if to say, "English bank managers do not tamper with their teller's cash, that goes without saying." I felt a little nettled and heated, and experienced a dawning sense of resentment that he should have imposed upon me the task of conjuring up illusions as well as the duty of dispelling them. The inspector's eyes had assumed the full official stare. I waited, determined that he should do his own share of the distasteful work, and already I began to see in the distance a reported case of insubordination, and an early retirement on my part to my northern home.

There was a suspicion of anger in the brown eyes of the inspector for a moment, and a hardening of his lips, but the tone of his next remark, or rather interrogatory, was politeness itself.

"The books?"

"I am not able to see how Mr. Fitzgerald can have committed any embezzlement through the books, all of which are kept exclusively by separate men,

under circumstances where successful collusion is nearly impossible. Neither, if any wrongdoing has taken place, has it occurred at the teller's desk. There may have been mistakes in judgment in which untrustworthy men have been allowed to overdraw their accounts, or to send in worthless paper for discount, but as to these matters I can say nothing, as they are outside of my department."

The remainder of the day was spent in going through the books and securities of the branch, and, so far as a cursory examination could determine, everything was in order. At 8 P.M. the inspector released the staff, the members of which at once left for their homes.

"I don't know what to think about it," said the inspector, leaning on my teller's desk as I was preparing to leave.

"Do you know about the Pordenone business?" I inquired.

"No."

I then explained at length the wild-goose chase of the previous Friday. The inspector remained silent for a long time and then inquired, "I wonder whether I could see Mrs. Fitzgerald?"

"Yes, I dare say."

In response to our inquiry, Mrs. Fitzgerald was said to be upstairs, and would be pleased to see the inspector.

"Will you go up too?" he asked.

"No, I prefer not; I would rather wait for you."

Mrs. Fitzgerald and family resided in a spacious flat over the bank premises.

When the inspector returned, he wore a puzzled air. "This thing grows worse and worse," he said. "Mrs. Fitzgerald seems anything but sure of her husband's rectitude."

"Mrs. Fitzgerald is insanely jealous and has got some mad idea into her head," I replied, "and she is absolutely reckless in consequence. I am sure that foul play has been committed and," with a great sense of inspiration, "I believe that some one must have written Mrs. Fitzgerald, and put her on a false trail in order to baffle pursuit. I feel," I added with emotion, "that my best friend has been murdered."

At that moment a tap came to the door of the private apartment where we were standing, and Mrs. Fitzgerald entered.

"Oh, Mr. Graham!" she remarked, in a surprised and chagrined tone.

"Tell me, madam," I said, almost beside myself, "has any one sent you an anonymous letter concerning your husband since Friday last?" In my impetuosity I had seized her hand, for she was withdrawing.

"Why should you think so?" she remarked in a very unsatisfactory tone.

"Madam, believe me, your husband has been murdered; if you do not care for his memory, care for that of your children. Have you received an anonymous letter? Much hinges upon that."

"No," she began boldly; and then added, "that is, I have had no letter directed to myself, but I have seen a communication addressed to another person which permits no doubt that my husband is the victim of a wretched infatuation which I would rather not discuss further."

"Will you inform us as to the channel through which you obtained that information?"

"Yes; through Marietta Silvani, the Italian maid of my friend, Mrs. Peach."

I suppose it was my stanch faith in Mr. Fitzgerald that made my vision so clear. I seemed to see as in a cobweb laden with dew, which revealed in the

garish light of day all its hidden and most subtle meshes, the foul net that had been laid for my friend's feet—a net intended to strangle life and reputation with one supreme effort.

"Madam," I said, "for God's sake help us; your husband has been killed, I feel certain, by an Italian gang; help us all you can, and do not suspect him."

But I was young, and I presume the unwonted excitement of the past few days, and maybe loss of blood in Friday's encounter, caused me to feel unduly excited. The interview ended very unsatisfactorily, and shortly afterwards I bade the inspector good night. My head was aching violently—I had not eaten food since the early morning. I fell asleep in the omnibus going home, and woke stiff and dazed, with a burning pain in my temples. As I threw myself upon the bed, I heard a soft, quiet voice murmur, "Yes, you are overworked: you want a holiday," and I saw once more the full dark eyes and snow-white hair of my dear chief, and felt his cool hand on my head, and I slept, with many strange and troubled dreams.

When I awoke, I was puzzled by my

surroundings. My bachelor rooms, in which I had gone to sleep, were bald in the extreme. A few much valued books, a shower bath, pairs of Indian clubs, dumb-bells, boxing gloves, foils, single sticks, etc., were all the ornaments I could boast of; now, however, my chamber was gay with flowers, the walls were enlivened with pictures, and the bed beneath me was soft and sybaritish compared with the hard material I usually had allowed myself on principle.

The change was not confined to the room. I had been ill; delirious with fever for three weeks, and during the early stages of my malady had been removed to more airy and more comfortable quarters by direction of my sister, who had arrived from the North to nurse me back to health.

I felt a desire to know about Mr. Fitzgerald, but the desire was feeble and intermittent, like all the impulses of a convalescing patient, so that, by the time I had labored through my inquiry, I usually fell asleep before I received a reply.

As the days went on I regained my accustomed strength, and a week after my return to consciousness the doctor

intimated that it was safe to satisfy my curiosity on all points.

Satisfaction, alas, there was none. Of Mr. Fitzgerald no tidings had been received. While his accounts were strictly correct, there were found to be among them some whose business was of an inferior character, and their infirmity had been terribly accentuated by the panic. In the rush of matters which had preceded the panic, London bankers, in their anxiety to secure business, had not scrutinized their paper with sufficient care. Not one banker only, but every financier in London, was to be blamed in that respect.

Mr. Fitzgerald's reputation at least was spared. It was commonly supposed that he had gone abroad for domestic reasons, and there was such dread of his death mixed up with the supposition, as sufficed to a certain extent to hallow his memory.

His wife, or widow, bore the calamity with a wonderful but scarcely commendable degree of fortitude, and by so doing greatly recommended herself and her offspring to the kindly consideration of her worthy uncle.



CHAPTER V.

PUTNAM, THE DETECTIVE'S, STORY.

AMONG those who called upon me during my illness was Putnam, the detective. He imagined that I had encountered some of my mishaps in his defence, and took a genuine interest in my recovery in consequence. From him I learned that Pordenone had disappeared.

"You remember those bills which I picked up as they fell from the Italian's pocket at the chemist's?" he inquired.

"Certainly."

"Well, I hunted up the acceptors and found that every bill was a forgery. It appears that Pordenone had handed a letter of introduction from one of the best Continental houses to one of our leading banks, and had been able to establish such good relations with the latter on the strength of it that on the Thursday before the panic the bank had agreed to discount the bills in ques-

tion, which Pordenone accordingly took to the bank the following afternoon for discount. Unfortunately for the forger, but very fortunately for the banker, the failure of Overend, Gurney & Co. had struck such dismay into all hearts that Pordenone's bills were declined with the reply that no bank in London could open a new discount account in the face of such a panic. If the latter subsided the bank would be able to take the paper. On investigation the letter of introduction was also found to be a forgery, and in the course of two or three days after the beginning of the panic, three additional banks were making solicitous inquiries as to Pordenone's whereabouts. Had the panic been delayed one week it was computed that the Neapolitan would have drawn his serpentine coils around probably a dozen London banks, and have been able to make off with nearly one hundred thousand pounds. As it was, he left a glowing train of infamy behind him in the city of London, and the only regret was that it ended so abruptly on the day of the panic. He had gone and left no trace whatever."

In the course of his vigorous hunt

Putnam had started one or two other quarries, but he was too well trained a hound to leave the proper trail. Finding the latter utterly gone, however, he doubled back on one rather promising scent.

“In searching Pordenone’s quarters, he had met Antonio Barbati, the cameo worker. Antonio was a tall, stout Italian, with closely cropped, bristling hair, an unshaven chin, and extensive dewlap. The quick, beady black eyes, small head, low forehead, and massive neck, showed extensive animal propensities, and these were well supported by a Herculean frame. Not by any means an ill-humored man, but a creature of coarse fibre, and when enraged, one likely to be as savage and reckless as any four-footed denizen of the jungle.

Putnam had nearly fallen foul of this gentleman by probing his inquiries too deeply, and had it not been that after his experience with Pordenone he had made a practice of carrying a revolver in following Italians, it is probable that Barbati would have killed him.

Putnam had discovered after patient search, in which he was aided by an Italian detective, that Pordenone was a

member of a secret Italian brotherhood, of which Barbati was the chief. Inquiries made in Italy concerning this society elicited a good deal of startling information of a sensational kind concerning it. The members of the society were bound to absolute obedience and fealty, by the most horrible vows, and the penalty of betrayal or even disobedience, sometimes indeed of a blunder, was death. This death penalty had been inflicted no less than sixteen times, and with a refinement of cruelty worthy of such a brotherhood. Its approach was always notified to the victim by the receipt, three days in advance, of a Maltese cross carved in black jet.

I think Putnam was a little vexed, if not actually alarmed, to think that his business had brought him into contact with such a very carmine crew.

"Do you think Pordenone has left the country?" I inquired.

"Yes, I think so; but I fancy he would find the Continent too hot for him. He may, however, have fled to Spain, with which we have no extradition treaty. The police, too, are not very particular there. Or he may have gone to South America, or even to the

United States. He is a species of vampire that has to live by suction of his fellow-man, and he would certainly fly to some popular centre."

Some time after this interview, Putnam wrote me a long letter, containing a piece of intelligence which made my heart sore and sick for many a day. It appeared that the Italian detectives had given more than usual attention to the Pordenone case in consequence of its relation to the Carbonari Brotherhood. In Naples especially the search for the murderer had been made the excuse for innumerable domiciliary visits of a kind highly unpleasant to the recipients.

In consequence of information received, a visit had been made to the house of a foreign lady of great beauty who was known to have returned from Europe some few weeks prior to the visit—about the time of the murder, in fact.

Guided by an anonymous letter, the Neapolitan police presented a warrant to this lady, empowering them to search her apartments. The communication had proved trustworthy, for in her jewel case was found the cameo pin belonging to Mr. Fitzgerald. It was

photographed and recognized as the identical pin worn by the latter.

In reply to the pointed inquiries of the police, the lady stated under oath that the pin had been given to her by her husband on the day of their marriage, the 7th of May. Her husband's name, she said, was Captain Mortimer, and she declared that the cameo pin was a likeness of himself. On being pressed as to her marriage, she stated that the ceremony had taken place in London on the day mentioned; but her ignorance of that city and the English language prevented her from recalling the name of the church; and her husband, who had subsequently disappeared, had carried off the certificate of marriage with him.

As the lady's story appeared to be open to some doubt, she was asked to give an itinerary of her journey after crossing the English Channel. This she professed herself perfectly willing to do, and, in order to prove the truth of her statement, she offered to accompany the detectives to a certain out-of-the-way Continental town, where her husband and she had stopped for upward of a week.

The detectives finally obtained from

the lady the name of the hotel at which they had stopped in the town. She said it had an English name; her husband chose it on that account; and on reference to the memorandum book, she declared the name was "The Belvedere."

In reply to an inquiry as to whether there was any register of visitors kept there, she said she believed not, but no doubt the landlord's book would show their names. In the result the lady's testimony was entirely corroborated by the landlord of the hotel.

It seemed as if the very dumb found tongue to belie my trust in human nature. Between the leaves of a guide-book was found a memorandum of the hotel expenses, indorsed in Mr. Fitzgerald's handwriting (subsequently identified by the bank), and, by some strange momentary aberration, the indorsement was actually signed with the unfortunate man's own initials, W. F., instead of those of his assumed name. This memorandum, which had also reference to the exchange of some English money, as well as to other disbursements, disclosed the fact that the so-called Captain Mortimer was well in funds. The hotel bill bearing this in-

dorsement was dated and receipted, and, with a fatal superfluity of method, gained in his long banking experience, the writer had added the date to his own memorandum.

The diamond cluster ring, too! I well remembered the half-suppressed air of pride with which he had exhibited it to me. It had been a present from a wealthy client on leaving England permanently, and it had cost some two hundred pounds.

Captain Mortimer was never traced further, and the trail ended there for good. The lady said he had left her a week after they were married. He seemed to be in distress about something, and she thought he had gone away to avoid arrest.

The bank directors, on hearing of the fresh discovery, shrugged their shoulders but decided to let the matter drop and keep their own counsel.

No communication was made to Mrs. Fitzgerald, and the silence observed was so discreet that beyond an irrepressible desire on the part of the bank inspector to jibe at my simplicity about Mr. Fitzgerald ("He was *so good* a man," he would say), the dead past buried its dead.



CHAPTER VI.

FRESH REVELATIONS.

THE discovery of the cameo pin and the diamond ring in such circumstances was a severe blow to my faith in the goodness of human nature, still I had no hard thoughts about Mr. Fitzgerald. So great and lasting did I find the charm of his gentle and fascinating manner and that sympathetic power of assimilation which the Scotch call "innerliness," that the man was as dear to me in memory as ever he had been. Himself and his vice were to me as distinct as those scriptural Gadareans and the evil spirits in the demented swine, when, demon-possessed, the latter had sunk to the bottom of the sea.

I closed my experience of London West End banking shortly after this. The bank needed a new manager, and I was too young for the appointment. I was, however, promoted to the position of "clerk in charge" of a country

branch, and three years later, in 1869, I was appointed London Bank manager. Among my new clients, there was a gentleman, who, after a time, became an intimate friend. He was an Italian by birth, had gained high distinction as a sculptor in Rome, had fought side by side with Garibaldi, and, latest and most important of his achievements, he had married a very wealthy English lady, whom his winning smile, courtly address, and enchanting voice had completely captivated. Their residence on Wimbledon Common was one of the largest private houses in the vicinity of London. Its grounds covered an area of twenty acres in extent, and were laid out with the best landscape gardening skill available in England.

My friend, whose name was Marangilo, rarely left his home, whose artistic treasure and capacities filled his artist's soul to repletion. This man and I had one sentiment in common, a vast appreciation of the beautiful. We became great friends, and I was a frequent visitor at his house.

One evening, during the summer of 1871, in turning over the leaves of an album in his drawing room, I came upon

some verses in the well-known and never-to-be-forgotten handwriting, and bearing the signature of Giuseppi Pordenone. To a well-trained banker, a handwriting and signature once familiar are things to be remembered forevermore. I recollected the signature as clearly as when I had first seen it years before, and looking upward toward my host, who was glancing down over my shoulder, I inquired whether he had known Pordenone.

"Yes, he is one great scoundrel," he remarked, in his imperfect English.

At that moment Miss Bonanette, an Italian lady sitting near, rose and approached the table, ostensibly for the purpose of laying down her fan, in reality, however, to examine the handwriting. I question whether she had heard the name very distinctly. She grew white with a sudden terror as her eyes fell upon the handwriting of Pordenone. Her eyes assumed a strange hunted expression, and she leaned on the table as if her limbs had given way under her; and she was about to fall. I rose with the idea of going to her assistance, for I was on the other side of the table, but hastily recovering herself,

she left the room with an uncertain and unsteady step. I thought that no eyes but mine had witnessed this episode; but on glancing to my right, I saw that the watchful orbs of Giovanni Diciconte, which seemed to follow her everywhere, had noticed the occurrence.

Giovanni was an Italian worker in cameos and crystals, and he was said to be an artist of rare ability whose love for his art kept him poor. He had the reputation of being too painstaking and too ambitious in his work. The brilliant renown which he subsequently achieved, however, rewarded him for his long privation. He and Marangilo were much attached to each other. They spent hours playing dominos and chess together, and although they never conversed much, each seemed to find sufficient solace in the mere presence of the other.

Giovanni was a creature of gentle disposition, with a soft, low voice. His face was strangely old-looking and homely; yet its antique complexion and jaded look were less conspicuous than the prevailing air of gentlemanly restraint and repose, and the courteous beam of pleasure which long habit

had set upon it for a permanency around the corners of his eyes and mouth. Every one liked Giovanni. He seemed to have no passions like the rest of the fiery Italians, who were so smiling as a rule, yet so excitable where Italian politics were concerned.

Although Giovanni displayed no passion in his talk on Italian politics, there was one, it was evident, whose presence moved him clear out of all his apathy—Miss Bonanette. It was hard to say whether she was aware of the constant watchfulness and yearning look of his patient eyes. I am inclined to think that she purposely ignored them, unwilling to notice them, lest the recognition should force some unpleasant issues. And it was evident that for the present at least Giovanni had no intention of compelling events. Whether he "feared his fate too much, or his deserts were small," it is hard to say. He seemed like one looking through a glass to treasures within, eagerly, anxiously, covetously, but with restraint, as aware of the obstacles in the way of possession.

Miss Bonanette's beauty was sufficiently remarkable to account for Gio-



vanni's infatuation. Her tall, graceful figure had a charm in its movements which attracted every glance. It possessed a style and rhythm, a certain harmony of balance, which enchained the eye, as some sweet strain of long-forgotten music will steal upon the senses and captivate them.

Across the broad lawn I could see the white-breasted stately swans afloat on their miniature lake, and I thought, as the door closed softly behind Miss Bonanette, that she moved as the swan glides through the water, with the graceful undulating movement which is, perhaps, unrivalled in any creature on land, and equalled only on the ocean by the majesty of a fully rigged ship sweeping before the trade winds.

Miss Bonanette's greatest witchery was, however, to be found in the unfailing variety which she presented. In her company every other woman appeared not only homely, but oppressively dull, and yet her charm of manner was entirely natural and without effort of any kind. To mankind generally, indeed, her attractiveness was heightened by her manifest shrinking from the homage which her beauty so fully warrant-

ed, but any expression of which in eye, or manner, or lip she so coldly refused.

Perhaps "coldly" is too strong a term, but the lady's numerous and disappointed admirers would willingly have substituted it for the idea which it was intended to express. She declined all attentions by ignoring them, and to those whose ardor threatened the outworks of the reserve which she had thrown around her, the startled air of surprise and alarm with which their further advances were received, while it abashed and discouraged them, convinced them that she was for the most part unconscious of the turmoil she was creating in the manly bosoms around her.

By and by it came to be recognized that Miss Bonanette was a lady with a mystery, if not actually with a history, of her own, and the interest she created deepened and widened day by day.

As she turned from the table, she raised her handkerchief to her face to disguise, I think, a flood of passion or terror which swept across it, convulsing every feature for the moment. A ray of sunlight, glancing for the instant on her half-bent head, gave a dark shim-

mer of blue to her black hair, such a lustre as may be seen when the sun flashes on the wing of a raven. Her complexion, usually devoid of color, faded to a pallor which was itself the color of the dead, and her lips seemed to quiver with a pent-up sob of anguish, or with recollections conjured up by that evil signature. I did not see the expression of her eyes, for they were turned away, but the droop of the proud head told its pitiful tale with sufficient plainness.

Up to that hour I had not seen much of Miss Bonanette, although I had heard a great deal of her beauty. In a former visit I had noticed a certain air of watchfulness in the large, dark, heavily fringed eyes, which seemed to me then to indicate the existence of some great trouble which, although buried maybe for the time, might be resurrected any day.

The change referred to in Miss Bonanette's expression was little more than momentary, but Giovanni's ever-watchful eyes detected it; and, when, on advancing to the table after she had left the room, he saw the cause of it in Pordenone's handwriting, I could see

and hear the small white teeth grate together under his bristling mustache. A patient, self-restrained man, and yet not such an one as I would like to have on my trail if I had wronged him or had crossed the one passion of his life.

But these reflections were dissipated by the voice of the host, Mr. Marangilo, addressing me.

"Let us go outside and have a cigar, and I will tell you all about Pordenone."

With some alacrity I arose to go with him, as his offer tallied so completely with the desire of my heart; and Giovanni, turning slowly from the hated handwriting, followed us out.

The rear of Monkswell faced in a westerly direction toward the Crystal Palace, which was six miles distant, on an air line. The intervening space between the two heights was of lower elevation, so that our seats commanded a full and unimpeded view of the glass towers and colonnades of the Palace, then red with the evening sun, and throwing back flash after flash from ten thousand panes of glass, like a Titanic signalling bureau. At the end of Mr. Marangilo's grounds were some fields, which bore an over-luxuriant appear-

ance of grass with a certain unkemptness of condition. A large pond surrounded by undergrowth seemed at that distance to be partially filled with duck-weed, water-lilies, and water-cress. The soil was rich, and a dense belt of weeds fringed the pond, which was also studded by an irregular growth of hawthorn bushes.

"Strange," I exclaimed, "that such valuable land should be allowed to remain idle."

"The estate is in Chancery," Mr. Marangilo explained; "and the land has been allowed to run to waste for the past seven or eight years. Personally, I shall be glad when the land finds a rightful owner. At present it is worse than a nuisance; there is a private foot-path which borders my property and runs through this disputed land; it is a short cut to Putney, known only to a few, and tramps often take their midday meals in the fields there, and are not only very unpleasant but very unsafe neighbors."

"In fact," Mr. Marangilo added, "I have been obliged to add a couple of large mastiffs to my household service, both as a warning to, and a protection

from, these roughs, who have on several occasions been exceedingly insolent both to my gardeners and to myself. Fortunately my mastiffs, in an encounter with a gang of these men, taught them a lesson which they will not readily forget, and which they appear to have communicated to their friends, as I have not seen so much of them lately. There, you can see the dogs I speak of crossing through the long grass by the lake."

When we lit our cigars and had each found the most comfortable position available in our Austrian rockers, we prepared to listen with absorbing attention to Mr. Marangilo's account of his acquaintance with Pordenone.

"I first met him," began Mr. Marangilo, "in Naples, my native city; that was, I think, about twelve years ago. Although not an artist by profession, Pordenone was as skilful as any of us. He could use a mallet and chisel as well as I could; he could cut a cameo better than most of those who made that a specialty, and was probably only surpassed by one man. But Pordenone's specialty was finance, for which he had had a marvellous genius. If a railway

was projected Pordenone was the man to obtain the needful concessions, and then, by his wonderful persuasiveness, to find the money for it. But his crowning scheme was the establishment of a great bank in Naples. Upon this work he converged all his powers; he laid everything else on one side, even his old associates, lest the air of Bohemianism which surrounded them should give an undesirable odor to his banking skirts. Upon the Bourse he soon began to be regarded as one of its strongest pillars. People marvelled at the change which had come over the man. With his success in life, all his gay optimism had departed.

"The buoyant courage and rich and varied fancy, which could with such alluring tongue open the closest purses to his rosy schemes, had left him, apparently never to return, and with them he had parted company with the scarlet tie, wide-awake hat, and velvet coat of his earlier days. Now the tall silk hat, black tie, and immaculate frock coat were the outward signs of the change to greater respectability which had taken place in the inner man.

"The result of this new and rigid air

of conservatism soon obtained for Pordenone the confidence he desired. His bank attracted numerous deposits, and if people here and there on the street complained that he had refused them loans against good collateral, the result reflected upon them and not on him. His credit grew and fattened on his reputation for niggardliness in the matter of advances. 'So very careful a man must be safe,' was the popular judgment, and sums of money long hoarded in secret corners were brought out and left with him—possibly not without some degree of palpitation on the part of a generally untrusting class—but still with good faith, or they would not have been left there at all; and husbands and wives could for the first time in years both leave their home at the same time, now that there was no old stocking to guard.

"It was all due to Pordenone, and the capitalists of Naples, large and small, thought well of the ere-while Bohemian. Important men of affairs were to be seen daily in Pordenone's company, and none thought the less of him because he so arranged that when seen in public with these authorities on finance, they always

seemed to be eager and impassioned, while he wore a bored and weary expression.

“Presently it was known that Pordenone had finally declined a loan to a great corporation against what was believed to be excellent security. This for the moment tended to arrest his popularity; but even then it was his judgment and not the safety of his bank which was in doubt. When, however, the corporation, whose credit was impaired by this refusal, went into liquidation within a week, his popularity redoubled, and public moneys which had hitherto been placed elsewhere, now sought the safe shelter of his custody. It was of no consequence that there were people who said that Pordenone’s refusal had been designed to ruin, and had ruined, a perfectly solvent concern. Such ill-natured remarks, it was held, were always to be expected.

“In the spring of 1859 Signor Pordenone’s bank had achieved the highest altitude of financial bliss. Its coffers were full, and, above and beyond its ordinary deposits, a sum of one million *lire* had been left with it, pending the transfer of titles of two large properties.

"At this juncture occurred one of the annual Neapolitan holidays, when for two days the entire city was given over to revel and festival. On the day after the holidays Mr. Pordenone's bank did not open its doors, and the members of the staff, after waiting for an hour, returned to their homes. This did not excite much comment, as some of the other banks did not open for business, as there was very little business done immediately after the festival. The next day, however, Mr. Pordenone was still absent, and the bank doors were broken open.

"To save you the trouble of conjecture I will tell you in a few words just what happened. Pordenone had refused all loans except a few of trifling amount. By cultivating the confidence of the public with infinite skill, he had reached a point beyond which his credit would never pass, or the amount of cash in his hands be larger. Recognizing this, and being in addition a little tired of the part he was acting, he had availed himself of these holidays to pack up all the bank cash (which he had long held in convenient shape) and to abscond with it.

"That, it was subsequently discovered, had been his intention from the outset. His whole scheme was dazzling in its very simplicity. To build up a great business with almost superhuman patience; to refuse loans in order to keep all the cash on hand, and then, when human credulity could pile his coffers no higher, to quietly enter the safes and walk off with the bank's money, was a new revelation in the art of swindling."

The narrative here given was told with much gesticulation and many vagaries of accent, which it is unnecessary to reproduce.

As Marangilo stopped to light a fresh cigar, I glanced across to Giovanni, upon whose face I noted a strangely intent look, as if he were listening for some expected noise, and, beyond my own exclamation of astonishment at Pordenone's villany, there was an unbroken silence, through which I could hear the faint ripple of the Venetian blinds in a window separated from us by a belt of heavily foliaged laurel. "The wind must be rising," was my soliloquy.

"Did you ever see Pordenone afterward?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes," said Marangilo, resuming; "three years after his flight from Naples he called upon me in London, and, with much apparent shamefacedness, told me that his ill-gotten gains had been a curse to him, and that he was in destitute circumstances. He expressed much sorrow for what he had done and appeared to feel keenly the fact that he could never return to his native city.

"After some talk, during which he shook off his gloom, he explained, with much of his old ability, a project he had which, with the aid of a little capital, would enable him to make, if not a fortune, at least a competence. He said the amount he needed was £400, and he begged me, by our old friendship, to help him in his extremity. 'He did not want any money,' he hastily explained, in order to reassure me; if I would give him two acceptances of mine for £200 each at two and three months' date, respectively, they would suffice. He knew where he could discount them.

"Well," continued Marangilo, with a half-scornful smile at the recollection of his own simplicity, "he had brought the stamped forms or blanks with him, and I finally signed them.

"After Pordenone had left and the glamour of his presence was removed I began to think that I had done a very foolish thing in giving my acceptances to be hawked about for discount by such a very slippery customer. I accordingly wrote, requesting him to bring back the bills and I would give him the cash instead. I preferred to do so, I explained.

"Two days later he called and handed me back my bills, which I examined and burned while he was looking on. I then gave him the £400, as agreed. Two months later the first due of the acceptances was presented to me for payment, and the holder informed me that the one due the following month was also in his possession. You can imagine my surprise, possessing as I did the clearest recollection of having destroyed the bills I had given. A careful examination of the bill presented satisfied me that it was genuine; and when the holder, by my request, brought me the second bill I found that also to be genuine. I paid them both at once without a word. Language was inadequate in the circumstances. Pordenone had forged copies of the acceptances, and

with amazing hardihood had handed me the forgeries, in burning which I had destroyed the only trace of the man's guilt.

"Pordenone kept out of my way for some time, and, on the occasion of a Masonic meeting, he induced one of the Masons to intercede with me for him. It is enough to say that I consented to forget the villany of the man, and that although I never invited him to my house I did not refuse to see him when he called to express his regrets in person. We were both Neapolitans, and in a strange country—we were both brother Masons—and we had been roisterous Bohemians together in our own sunny land. Your own great poet says, 'The cold in clime are cold in blood.' So, Mr. Graham, although you will think such conduct as the essence of feebleness on my part, Giovanni, here, will understand it.

"When Pordenone saw my rising anger, he came up to me, drew out a long knife which he carried, and handing it to me, said, 'There, Marangilo, it is your right; take my life if you like but don't be angry with me.' The man had more than the softness of a woman and more than the deviltry of a tiger.

"After that I did not see him for some years, but in the summer of 1866 I had a hurried visit from him. He seemed to be in straits over money matters, said the panic which had just happened had upset all his plans, and that unless I could let him have £500 he would be absolutely ruined. I refused to help him to the extent asked but gave him £100, which he said he would return to me in three days. I have never seen nor heard from him since."

"Did you notice anything remarkable about him that evening?" I inquired. "Was his head bandaged, for instance?"

"Yes, I recollect that his ear was bandaged; he explained that he had grazed it badly."

After this we sat and smoked in silence for a few minutes. The last light from the red sky fell on the weird pond in the fields below, and filled it to the brim with a lurid, blood-colored flood. All the rest of the fields lay in an ever-deepening shadow; only there, dyeing the bulrushes, the weeds, and the stagnant waters, a shaft of tinted light like a blood-stained hand, shot downward through the sky until its

index finger seemed to touch and stain the grewsome water.

"That Chancery pond is an ill-looking place," said Marangilo; "I would like to see it filled up."

"I saw Pordenone that evening," said Giovanni, slowly and meditatively, switching the conversation back on to its old lines. "I saw him twice: once here, when I was leaving, and an hour afterwards at Putney Station."

Giovanni was more communicative than usual, and he continued in a level monotone, broken only by the intervals of attention demanded by his cigar and by one question of mine.

"I left him here, and on going outside, I found a gentleman pacing up and down the sidewalk skirting the common. A hansom cab was waiting for him, but the driver suddenly said that he could not wait any longer, as he was already overdue for an appointment. The gentleman paid the driver, and I availed myself of the returning cab to ride to Putney.

"I remember that hansom for a peculiar reason—the license number of the vehicle was identical with the year of my birth, 1827, and as it faced me

on the splash-board in front, during the two-mile drive, I wondered whether it was an omen of luck. It ended with one cardinal number, and was divisible by the other two. Mine was supposed to be a lucky birth year," and Giovanni sighed softly, as if he thought the luck was a long time coming.

"Did you notice the gentleman who was waiting for Pordenone?" I inquired, remembering that there were at least three people who were more than anxious to meet him at that time—the day after his escape from Putnam and myself.

"Yes, he was a tall, soldierly man, with large dark eyes and white hair."

"You are a cameo-cutter—did you notice any special ornament in his dress?"

The question was mine; and as I leaned forward in my eagerness, I saw the blood-red pool blotted out of sight as the sun's rays left the earth—the index hand seemed to be withdrawn, and not to fade as shafts of light ordinarily disappear.

"Yes," said Giovanni, replying to my question, "I noticed a cameo pin in his necktie which I recognized as the work

was done by my friend, Barbati; I had seen him working at it."

After all these long, dark years, light seemed to be breaking at last; but what light was it to be?

"Go on," I said, as Giovanni stopped and relit his cigar, and my voice sounded dry and hoarse in my own ears.

"Oh, there is very little more to tell. I missed the train at Putney and had to wait for an hour. After I had entered the carriage, and just as the train was moving off, I saw Pordenone rush breathlessly into the station, and, brushing an indignant porter aside, I saw him force himself into a compartment. He seemed as if he had been running violently, as he was panting heavily, and his features were pinched and bloodless. I concluded that he had been rushing to catch the train. I intended intercepting him at the terminus, as I had an inquiry to make of him, but when we reached Victoria Station he had disappeared, having left the train at some intermediate station."

That was the last Giovanni had seen of Pordenone, and, so far as he was aware, none of the Italian set to which he belonged had heard of him since

then; of course he could not say as to Barbati. As the head of the brotherhood the latter knew many things unknown to them, and kept his own counsel in a way that did not admit of any injudicious inquiries.

We had drifted somewhat aground in our pursuit of information when Giovanni again set us afloat with the remark that the stranger, whom he had found pacing outside Monkswell, had asked him whether Pordenone had left, and the inquiry had been made in a tone which suggested the suspicion that the Italian had given him the slip.

Giovanni, it appeared, had never heard of Mr. Fitzgerald's reported death. He had, in a casual way, heard of his disappearance, at which he was not surprised after seeing him with Pordenone.

"It is growing cold; let us go in," suddenly said Marangilo, rising to his feet and tossing his half smoked cigar away. At that moment the window behind the laurels closed with a sudden snap as if Marangilo's hasty decision had startled an eavesdropper.

"Who occupies that very much shaded room?" I inquired, carelessly.

"Miss Bonanette," was the somewhat surprising reply.

At dinner there was a considerable pre-occupation of manner perceptible, notwithstanding spasmodic efforts apparent to force a livelier conversation. Miss Bonanette had pleaded a headache, and begged to be excused from coming to table.

I retired early to my rooms on the excuse of having some letters to write. Having finished these I paced up and down the suite of rooms, until I was thankful that the thick carpets deadened the weight of my ceaseless footfalls across the floor. The bathroom, which formed part of the suite I occupied, overlooked the grounds, and at last, worn out with impatience, and haunted by the recollection of the ghostly pond, I raised the Venetian blind, fascinated by the suspicions which, in a blind, unintelligible way, centered in the marsh below.

I felt as if I should never sleep, and after gazing a minute at the cold, silent grounds below, I closed the blind with a shudder. Returning to my bedroom, I seized a sheet of paper and endeavored to put down all I could recall of Mr.

Fitzgerald's disappearance. I had always been accustomed to think with the pen in my hand, and now as I put down point after point, the suspicion which had been growing upon me all the evening deepened to a conviction that time and circumstance, by long and devious routes, had at last brought me to the brink of a discovery of the mystery which shrouded my friend's fate.

I looked out from the window once more. The moon shone clear and full, and as if in broadest daylight, I could see my friend's mastiffs gambolling on the lawn together. Glancing at the French clock, I found the time was yet scarcely twelve. Changing my slippers for a pair of heavy boots, and throwing on an overcoat, I quietly descended the stairs, possessed, it seems to me now, by a spirit or influence which I was powerless to resist.

As I crossed the quadrangle, I saw to my surprise that the billiard room was still lit up. In a corner near the open window sat Marangilo and Giovanni, silent as two sphinxes, playing chess.

"Hallo! where are you going?" was

their greeting, as I stepped through the open window into the billiard room.

"Down to the pond; will you come?"

Giovanni raised his eyes slowly to my face. Something there surprised him, for, rising quietly, he said, "Yes, I will go."





CHAPTER VII.

THE MIDNIGHT SEARCH.

As we passed out onto the open sward the mastiffs simultaneously stopped their rough gambols and threw up their heads with a growl of angry surprise and menace. But only for a moment. The next instant was one of recognition and remorse, and they bounded to our sides with every expression of canine delight.

I thought at the time—with a breath of relief—how rich the canine vocabulary was in the language of welcome. Every square inch of their huge frames, from tip of tongue to tip of tail, was eloquent with delight. I felt relieved, because I knew from personal experience that the mastiff and the bulldog are sometimes slow to distinguish their masters at night, or in unwonted circumstances, as their sense of smell and sight are less keen than those of some other domestic dogs.

Instantly, however, the fawning ceased, and both animals threw themselves into threatening attitudes. With heads erect, and with the muscles corded on their massive necks, they might have seemed cast in bronze but for the yellow fire which flamed from their eyes and the ominous growls from their hoarse throats. My nerves were somewhat unstrung, and the sudden and unexpected alarm startled me.

The eyes of both dogs were pointed in one direction—toward the belt of laurel where we had been sitting earlier in the evening. I could neither see nor hear a cause, and Marangilo's explanation, "One of the servants, I suppose," both satisfied and ridiculed our fears, more especially as the dogs presently turned away their gaze and resumed their trot by our sides. On looking back shortly afterwards I saw a flicker of white through the bushes at a height from the ground which induced me to think the explanation correct. The dogs saw it too, and Cleo trotted off silently towards it without any sign of anger, while Hector kept his place unconcernedly by us.

To avoid a difficult fence we made

somewhat of a detour through the grounds, and during the walk I briefly explained to Marangilo and Giovanni my acquaintance with Pordenone and the disappearance of Mr. Fitzgerald. I did not encumber my short narrative with any relation of the story of the Continental discovery concerning Captain Mortimer, for I had grown to discredit it. My conviction was that Mr. Fitzgerald's existence ended near Monkswell in the interview with Pordenone prior to the latter's appearance at Putney station. If foul play had taken place in the vicinity of Mr. Marangilo's house, the body of the victim must have been very carefully hidden. The idea of its being buried seemed out of the question, and as every foot of ground in the neighborhood was under continuous cultivation, excepting the debatable ground in which the pond stood, I felt that there, if anywhere, lay the key to the mystery. The omens which assisted my judgment I did not refer to.

Marangilo removed his heavy meerschau pipe from between his lips and stood still. He was visibly perturbed, and his voice almost faltered as he spoke.

"I thought, Graham, it was merely a whim of yours to visit the pond to-night, to see our choice collection of frogs, maybe. I think we ought to postpone this search till day-break. It is quite late now, and, although I think there is not the remotest chance of any discovery, should any occur it would upset everything to-night. As it is, the damp has affected my throat already." And my friend Marangilo looked as if he fancied that he had been very badly used indeed.

"Well, go back," I replied; "I will join you in a quarter of an hour. I could not sleep if I did not visit the pond to-night. We can, however, leave the search till the morning."

Giovanni hesitated, as if doubtful whether to go on with me or return with Marangilo. I begged him to go back, however, and they went off together.

"Don't be long; you will find us in the billiard room." Hector remained with me; I seemed to promise him a longer companionship, as the others were going indoors.

Once left alone the old influence which had dragged me out of the house

at midnight returned with redoubled force, and I was again possessed of a resolution before which any shrinking dread of possible horrors lost all control over me. I stood and watched the retreating forms of my friends, somewhat sadly and wistfully. The huge mastiff, Hector, stood immovable by my side, as if the gravity of the situation had impressed even his careless brain.

What in Heaven's name was I about to discover—if I found anything at all?

I heard the doors close behind my friends, and I stood alone under the weird moonlight—the only man in a dead world, it seemed to me. Then the memory of my long-lost friend came back, so tangibly, and so life-like, that he seemed to be by my side in the old bank once more, and the moonlight glancing on the towers of Monkswell and the dark shadows thrown here and there on the lawn by the dotted shrubs—and, on the other side, the ghostly lake—all looked like portions of some weird theatrical scene of which I was simply a spectator. Then I recognized myself as an actor in the drama and not a spectator; still everything seemed unreal.

I was possessed for the time being of a duality of existence. In my first character I stood as if in a dream, and in a state of mind which so far as it was distinct or intelligible was on the borders of a panic; my second character seemed shred of every kind of weakness and resolute to go through the ghostly work which fate or chance had fashioned for me.

Pulling myself somewhat harshly together I took my courage in both hands, and brushed through the rough weeds which skirted the lake, the dog following closely at my heels.

Before I had gone fifty yards I felt the reasonableness and, no less, the hopelessness of my moonlight quest. The marshy foreground of the pond was so repulsive in its ooze and sliminess, and the depth of its pools so uncertain, that it would indeed have been a hardy traveller who would have penetrated the seventy or eighty yards of the morass which fringed the pond itself. Here and there small mounds or islets stood out from the water, and on some of these a luxuriant growth of hawthorn flourished. On the further side of the pond there was a species of

beech which flung a heavy, impenetrable shade round its roots. That was the only large tree which I could see as my gaze swept the pond and its environs.

At every step which I took my feet sank deeply in the ooze and mire, and, after my first wetting, I waded steadily forward, sometimes dropping abruptly waist-deep in the water. Surely, I thought, no man could devise a better place to conceal a body than a marshy pond like this in a Chancery-bound field. The mastiff kept faithfully by my side, heedless like myself of the huge bullfrogs and water-rats which on all sides slid and plunged into the water.

At last I reached the pond itself with its green coating of duckweed. Here and there the water shone out between the crevices of its covering—black, treacherous, and inscrutable. Was there anything beneath that black veil which I desired to see? I turned away baffled and heartsore—consoled, however, somewhat by the resolution to have its depths explored by a drag-net on the morrow.

I felt chilly and dispirited, and whether the cold had cooled the fever

of my brain or not, I cannot say, but it seemed as though I was losing the courage of my former views. Disappointment in a critical search is bad enough, but when the conviction dawns upon you that you have taken up an entirely wrong scent the discouragement is doubly great.

I had not reached that point yet. My judgment came to the aid of my imagination now, just as my imagination or inspiration had converted my judgment before. But the excessive cold had chilled my ardor, and the black shadows cast by the brilliant moonlight rendered anything like a reliable search impossible. In wading landward Hector climbed onto a dry mound and shook the water vigorously from his coat. The soil of the little islet was black mould—and as it lay comparatively high it was dry and hard. I had turned my face away to avoid the rain of drops which the dog was scattering round him, and after a while, thinking that he was loitering behind, I turned to call him.

The distance between us was possibly ten yards. As I called the dog he raised his head—with reluctance it seemed to me—and I saw in front of his paws a

white object lying on the black ground. It might have been anything—a white piece of broken kitchenware—a child's bone rattle—a pair of castanets. In a moment I thought—it seemed to me—of a thousand things which it might be—well knowing in my soul that it was none of these, but feeling that there, appealing to Heaven under the midnight sky, and not in vain, was the key to the fate of my friend.

With a voice rough with emotion I drove the dog back, and picked up—with feelings such as no language can describe—the first two fingers of a human hand. At length my long uncertainty was ended, for I never, for a moment, doubted that the mournful relic belonged to my friend's body.

A search of the mound and of those around it revealed nothing further.

In returning to the house through a narrow walk bordered by a massive hedge which threw the pathway into the deepest shade, Hector suddenly left me, and on rounding a corner of the walk, I felt a touch on my shoulder which startled me greatly in my overstrained state. Nor did the sight which met my eyes tend to reassure me. The

darkness was so intense in the shadow of the great beech hedge that all I could make out was a tall figure in white, with a face as pallid as the dress, and eyes which seemed to burn through the darkness.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Graham."

The voice was that of Miss Bonanette.

"May I speak with you a minute? Believe me, nothing but the most desperate necessity would induce me to adopt this means of obtaining the information I desire."

"Would it not be wiser to defer your inquiry till the morning, Miss Bonanette?" I inquired. "It is very late now, and I could answer any inquiries to-morrow just as well—in the drawing-room, say, at eleven o'clock. The room is quite deserted then."

"Oh, no! You do not understand. I shall go mad to-night if I can get no relief—indeed, I think I am half mad as it is.

"You are after Pordenone," she went on excitedly. "Oh, don't deny it—I know it. If you value your life and your soul, leave him alone, and let him go free. He is not human. Every man,

woman, or child who has ever crossed his path has come to grief and ruin."

Seeing that there was no help for the situation, I begged Miss Bonanette to endeavor to be calm and to tell me what she knew of Pordenone. She was entirely too unhinged to make any reservations and when, her story ended, she sank on the seat beside her, the whole diabolical plotting of Pordenone lay clear before my eyes.

Miss Bonanette was the daughter of the shipbuilder in London who had accompanied me from the Bank of England on the day of the panic, when Pordenone escaped from me the second time. She was an Italian—a Neapolitan by birth. She had met Pordenone at the house of a mutual friend in Naples, and, after a while, he had obtained such influence over her—although she never regarded him otherwise than with aversion—that when he asked her to marry him she eventually consented. For reasons connected with his banking schemes—then in their zenith—he insisted that the marriage should be kept secret. When he absconded she went with him in entire ignorance of his wrongdoing. For a short period they

lived together in great splendor. Then a period of privation ensued, and she began to gather some clues as to the precarious character of her husband's business.

In 1866, on the 11th of May—the date was fixed on her mind—she crossed to the Continent and was joined the next day at Boulogne by Pordenone. It was shortly after that date that he informed her that two bills which she had obtained the cash for in London on his behalf were forgeries; that the London police were searching for her, and that, if caught, the punishment was twenty years' penal servitude. Under threats to surrender her to the London police he compelled her to write the anonymous letter which caused the domiciliary visit to her home, where the cameo pin and diamond cluster ring were found; and to tell the fabricated narrative about Captain Mortimer. The memorandum in Mr. Fitzgerald's handwriting, she saw Pordenone copy from a specimen of the bank manager's writing. The hotel keeper who confirmed her narrative as to Captain Mortimer was a creature of Pordenone.

All these elaborate precautions had

been taken, she believed, to throw some one who was hunting for Pordenone for some crime, off the scent. Pordenone had left her for good shortly after this, telling her before going, with diabolical glee, that as he had another and prior wife already living she was not legally married to him; telling her also that his real wife was the sister of Barbati, the head of the Carbonari, and adding, "If Barbati ever suspects our relations he will get one of the hundred assassins at his disposal to kill you on the plea of necessity for the sake of the cause."

The personal dread of Pordenone, the fear of the threatened action for the forgeries, and her terror of the Carbonari, had filled her subsequent life with alarm and apprehension, while the recollection of Pordenone's betrayal had crushed and darkened her existence.

The Marangilos did not know her history. They had met her abroad, and she had for a season been companion to Madame Marangilo, and had subsequently been asked to remain as a friend. The sight of Pordenone's handwriting had recalled her past misery; and she had heard our conversation on the piazza that evening. She had been

unable to sleep and had seen us leave the house at midnight. In her desperate desire to know all about the man who had so shadowed her life she intended to follow us, but her detection by the dogs prevented her.

In return for her candor, and in response to her eager inquiries as to my reasons for visiting the pond, I explained my convictions as to my friend's death. Miss Bonanette, in her excitement, rose to her feet, and I could feel, more than I could see, the horror in her eyes.

But I went on, unthinkingly, engrossed by my subject. I led her out of the shadow into the full moonlight, and took from my handkerchief the dread evidences of a crime. Then turning to look at her, I recognized the terrible blunder I had committed. Poor Miss Bonanette's strength had given way. As her eyes fell on the fleshless fingers, her features were convulsed with horror. A deadlier pallor crept over her face, and, with a piercing shriek, which startled the owls in the old belfry, she fell prone on the ground.

Aghast at my own want of consideration I lifted the unconscious form, in-

tending to place it on the seat until I could reflect what had best be done.

I heard a hasty step behind, and turned promptly toward it. As I did I felt a sharp pain in my shoulder, and found myself face to face with Giovanni, stiletto in hand.





CHAPTER VIII.

SERIOUS COMPLICATIONS—THE ANA- CONDA.

GIOVANNI in peace and Giovanni in war were as dissimilar as the domestic cat purring on the hearthrug is different from the man-eating tiger in the act of pouncing upon his victim. The rage of his eyes as they gleamed from under his bent brows, and the menacing flash of the stiletto as he raised it the second time, made me give back a step. I was heavily encumbered, for Miss Bonanette showed no signs of returning consciousness, and it was equally out of the question that I should deposit her on the ground or use her as a shield to stop Giovanni's insane attack. But I was smarting from the pain of the wound I had received, and was not a little wrathful at the uncalled-for attack, so shifting the inanimate weight onto my left arm, without fur-

ther ado I prepared to defend myself as well as I could with my right hand. This was but the work of a second, and Giovanni, who was too manly to strike while there was a danger of injuring Miss Bonanette, and who had remained in an attitude which is best described as crouching for a spring, launched himself at me the moment I stood exposed to his attack.

It was necessary that something should happen at once to prevent the very one-sided conflict from ending disastrously for myself. The intervention came in time. For the fraction of a second, it seemed, I heard the rush of padded feet, then a suppressed growl or hoarse breath brushed past my ear in mid-air, and Giovanni was hurled headlong to the ground, with Hector's teeth imbedded in his shoulder.

The next instant Mr. Marangilo stood in front of me, with dire amazement stamped on every feature of his face. He was about to speak—to ask a torrent of questions, I could see—but I motioned him to be silent. Miss Bonanette was returning to consciousness, and I placed her on one of the rustic seats while Marangilo picked up the stiletto which

the pain of the dog's bite had shaken from Giovanni's grasp. Hector, who had flown so promptly to my relief at the bidding of his master, was persuaded to release his hold, and Giovanni rose to his feet, his face a curious study of physical and mental suffering.

As Mr. Marangilo continued to look askance at me in a very perturbed way, I begged him, in a low tone, to return to the house and to take Giovanni with him, before Miss Bonanette recovered full consciousness, as I dreaded the effect should she recognize them. As he still looked unsatisfied, I said that I had no doubt whatever that Miss Bonanette would, of her own accord, explain everything to Madame Marangilo the following day, and that, I added, would in every way be more becoming than any explanation of mine could be.

The footfalls of the two had scarcely died away before Miss Bonanette returned to full consciousness with a piteous appeal for water. Glancing hastily around to discover the nearest faucet, my eyes fell on the snake-house, an extension of the long range of green-houses from which it was warmed.

This house stood close behind us, but was somewhat screened from view by the shrubbery. I knew that it contained a faucet, but in all probability the door was locked. Pressing through the hedge, to my surprise I found it unlocked. As I had no cup or vessel to carry the water, I supported Miss Bonnette to the faucet. As she stooped to drink the water out of her tiny palms, she suddenly shrieked out "Pordenone!"

I was considerably startled. Following the direction of her gaze, my eyes fell on a sight which, to say the least, was of a very disturbing character. The snake-house, it must be explained, consisted of two large apartments with a glass roof, and with walls of glass protected by strong iron netting. The inmates were, with one exception, confined in compartments with glass fronts, as is customary in snake-houses. The exception was a very large anaconda of the Amazon, which had been added to the collection some weeks previously. A special chamber was in course of preparation for this formidable monster, and as it had been in a state of harmless torpor since its arrival, a temporary bed had been made for it in

the corner of the snake-house, where it had lain immovable for upward of a month, coiled within a large circular framework of wood placed on the floor and under its covering of rough blankets.

Following Miss Bonanette's horrified gaze, I saw a huge head projecting from under the blankets, the eyes burning with intensity and malignity which were indescribable and fascinating almost beyond power of resistance. Strange as it may seem, the serpentine face reminded me of Pordenone, as it had apparently reminded Miss Bonanette.

Seeing the necessity for instant action, I hastily thrust myself between the lady and the snake, thereby enabling her to regain command of herself. As I did so, I turned my back on the huge reptile, and it was with no small feeling of horror that I did so, as I dreaded that he might strike me as I moved, although I was aware that a python cannot spring his full length, and the distance between us was fully fifteen feet.

"The door!" I whispered imperatively, and as she moved toward it I re-

luctantly turned and faced the monster as I also slowly retreated backward toward the entrance. The head and body of the anaconda now stretched some distance from under its covering, flat on the ground, as if gathering for a spring, while the eyes scintillated with unhallowed fire and the forked tongue darted outward from the formidable jaws.

The snake, however, was either short of reach or not yet fully recovered from his long sleep, from which the excessive heat of the two previous days had no doubt aroused him. At all events we escaped. Poor Miss Bonnette fell panting on the rustic seat, covering her face with her hands and saying shudderingly, "Oh, what a terrible night this is!"

Very soon the frenzy of her double shock, first from the sight of the dread relics from the pond, and then from the threatened attack of the snake, spent itself in tears, and I observed her weeping silently with an air of hopeless dejection which it was pitiful to see. The sight was distressing and disconcerting to myself in the extreme, and as I had sufficient excuse for movement in my

still wet and ice-cold clothes and stiffening shoulder, grazed by Giovanni's knife, I walked up and down to restore my congealing circulation. When parallel with the snake house, I passed through the shubbery and peered through the guarded windows. As my eyes became accustomed to the shade I did see that the anaconda had dragged his full length (seventeen feet it was subsequently discovered to be) from his shelter. His head and the nether portion of his revolting form still lay flat on the boarded floor, while the remainder of his body coiled and uncoiled its vast circumference a child's height from the ground. Watching the folding and unfolding, the twisting out and in, and the continuous change of color of the vast bulk, it seemed as if several snakes, and not one only, were gyrating before me. Yet, through all this motion, the head lay still, save for a slight, almost imperceptible, advance across the floor, and save also for the baleful fire of the eyes and the incessant and revolting play of the forked tongue.

While debating in my own mind how I could best warn the gardener of the danger of entering the snake-house in

the morning, I was startled almost into a cry by the pressure of a cold damp object against my hand. Looking down I saw Hector's great, patient, lovable eyes looking up into my face as he tried to attract my notice by thrusting his nose into my palm. He had not seen the snake as yet, but the snake had seen him. There was just such a turn of head as only a seaman can notice when a ship is slowly moved a point closer to the wind, and before the eye had time to wink, the huge head, like a live shell, crashed against the glass by the dog's head. The double house had once been a conservatory, and the glass was thick French plate. Still the impact of the snake's head fractured the huge pane, and it was only the strong wire netting which stopped the python's attack. At the first glance of the flashing figure Hector's instinct enabled him to grasp the situation at once. Hector was brave as a lion, but the largest dog has no more chance of life with a full-grown anaconda of the Amazon than he would have with a twenty-foot crocodile of the Nile. A fight with a foreign reptile like an anaconda is hardly to be considered in the day's work of an honest

English dog. So Hector seemed to think, and notwithstanding the bristling hair, the threatening fangs, and generally ferocious aspect which he had assumed, as he drew himself back from his advanced forepaws, there was that in his look which savored more of a gage of battle declined than accepted.

As for the serpent, he had missed his aim, and gathering his quivering bulk into line, he lay still, prone. An occasional quiver which ran along his huge length, as rings run out over the water's surface when disturbed by a stone, the unquenched fire of the eyes, and the ceaseless play of the tongue, were all the signs of the ferocious activity which was now fully awake within him.

The narrative of that night's episodes appears long in recital; in reality, probably not more than a quarter of an hour had elapsed from the time that I had first been accosted by Miss Bonanette until returning from the snake-house, to Hector's great relief, I found that lady rising to her feet as if about to leave the grounds.

Offering Miss Bonanette the support of my arm, I conducted her to the house, which she entered by the window of her

own room. She was more composed, and I tendered her every assurance of the protection of her friends. Of any fears of prosecution in connection with the passing of Pordenone's forgeries, I was in a position to relieve her; and I ridiculed the idea of Barbatì's enmity. With regard to Pordenone, all I could say was that in the light of recent discoveries, probably Monkswell would be the last place in the world he would desire to revisit. Miss Bonanette's fears were to some extent allayed, and when, for many reasons, I entreated her to confide everything to Madame Marangilo in the morning, she, after a moment's hesitation, consented to do so. After she had given me this promise Miss Bonanette's mind seemed to be released from a great burden. Her poor storm-tossed heart was only too glad to unbosom its grief to some sympathetic and friendly ear.

As Miss Bonanette turned from the window into her room, I recalled one point of discrepancy not yet cleared up. Giovanni had described Mr. Fitzgerald as wearing the cameo pin when he found him outside, waiting for Pordenone. How did this agree with the

fact that the same pin was found later on in Miss Bonanette's possession when the police made their domiciliary visit and obtained from her the details about Captain Mortimer?

I had turned away from the low French window by which Miss Bonanette had entered, and stood for a second, half hesitating whether I should ask her for some explanation, when it flashed through my brain that Porde none had taken the pin from the dead body. This simple solution had not occurred to me at the outset, and yet it was so self-evident that I began to think that the night's experiences had made me painfully obtuse.

Retracing my steps across the quadrangle I entered the billiard room to confront Marangilo and my irate friend Giovanni, with whom I felt I had some ground of complaint of a rather serious kind.

The fire in the grate had been recently lit and was burning brightly. Marangilo stood on the hearthrug with his cigar in his hand, as if my entrance had stopped him in the middle of his remarks. Giovanni sat huddled up in a large heavy armchair—a shrunken

island amid a waste of upholstery. His features were pinched and drawn, and his sunken eyes were riveted on the rug at Marangilo's feet. His air was one of shamefaced sullenness, and the dogged set of his features had a very alien look on the usually gentle face. He did not look up as I entered.

As I was the injured individual, it was necessary that I should demand the cause of the attack. Removing my coat from my stiff and swollen shoulder, I asked Marangilo to help me investigate the extent of my injury. The wound was only a slight one, as, fortunately for myself, the knife had for the most part passed between my arm and my body. The shoulder muscles were somewhat lacerated, but although the wound was painful in its undressed state, it was not at all dangerous. Still it was not due to any lack of intention that Giovanni's knife had not found its billet two inches further to the right, in which case my search would have been ended with much abruptness.

The sight of my own blood and the recognition of my very hairbreadth escape from sudden death at the hands of a man whom I had regarded as a

friend, enraged me, and striding up to Giovanni I dragged him from the arm-chair and shook him onto his feet. Then, but still slowly, he turned his eyes upon me. The look of despair and of utter misery which I saw there calmed me at once. I slowly removed my hands from him and walked back to the fireplace, while he dropped, as lead falls, into his seat.

Marangilo motioned me to the deep embrasure of a window, and said with much concern, "Can't you see what the matter is? Giovanni loves Miss Bonanette so madly that he would kiss the very ground on which she walks, and he finds you alone with her at midnight, under, to say the least of it, very extraordinary circumstances. You will remember that the cause of Giovanni's appearance was Miss Bonanette's scream, apparently for help. Put yourself in his place and ask yourself what you would have done. What is driving him half mad now is the thought that Miss Bonanette must have met you voluntarily; how else explain her presence in the grounds at such an hour in her ordinary attire?"

"I wish that I could persuade you,

Marangilo, to assume that all this admits of the very simplest and most innocent solution—why not leave things just as they are until the morning when, I know, Miss Bonanette will tell your wife everything?”

“Well, but,” continued Marangilo with a harsh laugh, “that is good. You say, leave things as they are, be patient, and all will come right—and meanwhile you show your patience by shaking Giovanni’s teeth out of his head.”

My course was far from being a wise one, it is possible, but I thought that further reticence under the strained condition of affairs might cause irreparable harm, so, taking Marangilo by the arm, I led him in front of Giovanni and, addressing the latter, I said:

“You wish to know what Miss Bonanette and I had to say to each other to-night, and why she screamed. Now, not for your sake, but for hers, I tell you that she overheard all our talk about Pordenone this afternoon, and followed me to-night because she believed that my midnight search was connected, somehow, with Pordenone. Now, listen; that man is the evil genius

of Miss Bonanette's life, he has caught her in toils which have almost crazed her brain, and he is the hourly and unspeakable terror of her existence. Can you wonder that she should risk even suspicion to find out something which would perhaps lighten the intolerable burden of her life? The cause of her scream was the unguarded display by myself of a portion of a human hand found in the marsh to-night, and which I believe to belong to the dead body of my friend, killed by Giuseppe Pordene. My meeting with Miss Bonanette was absolutely unexpected on my part, and if you reflect a moment and ask yourself why I should come and ask you both to go with me if I had an assignation to keep, you will see how wrong your suspicions are."

As I finished speaking Giovanni rose to his feet, and taking my hand in both his, he murmured in a voice broken with emotion:

"I believe you. God forgive me for my attempt to kill you, but I was driven out of my senses by the sight on the ground."

And, soft and gentle to the last, except when goaded to madness, he sank

into his seat, while the tears of relief dropped from his heavy eyes.

As for Marangilo, he bethought him of a universal English remedy under strained conditions, and he suggested some "brandy and soda water," as I was wet. As the bottle of Schweppes, released from its wire, drove the cork from the neck with the report of a pistol, we all smiled and said "Hus-h-h!"

A few minutes afterward I retired, glad to have the opportunity to remove my saturated clothes. Before doing so I arranged for an inspection of the marsh and pond the following morning.





CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCOVERY AT THE POND.

BEFORE I fell asleep it occurred to me that I had failed to take precautions to have the gardener warned not to go into the snakehouse, as he might probably do early in the morning to feed the smaller reptiles.

This thought disturbed me somewhat, and it was only after making up my mind to be down in sufficient time to caution him that I could find any sleep.

The slumber which came at last was disturbed and distracting. The startling impressions of the past day were not to be effaced at will.

From Wimbledon Common to the old bank my ghostly fancy transported me, and my dreams at first were a horrid medley of personal encounters in dark archways, of flashing stilettos, and of pale, saturnine countenances, framed—like Pordenone's—in snaky, Medusa locks.

Then the scene changed back to Wimbledon, and the weird midnight search in the loathsome marsh added to the horrors of my dreams.

The intense moonlight, however, seemed everywhere, and I fell to reckoning how soon the moon would set, and I be rid of that weird persistent light, which seemed to watch me with the lusterless gaze of dead, unwinking eyes.

Suddenly, I thought, the light became softer and less obtrusive, and looking up I saw limned against the moon's yellow disc the form of a Maltese cross, clearly cut and densely black.

Where I was when I first saw this strange phenomenon I do not now recall, but when I turned my gaze from the heavens I found that I was standing in the lane which led from Wimbledon Common to Putney—that lane which the tramps had at one time made so troublesome to Mr. Marangilo.

I was standing in the shade of a large tree bordering the footpath, and was invisible to any passer-by.

I thought I would take a sketch of the wonderful cross with its halo of yellow moon, for even in my sleep it

impressed me as being ghostly in the extreme. As I was opening my notebook for that purpose, I heard voices in my neighborhood, and, with a rush of surprise which almost made me call out aloud, I saw Mr. Fitzgerald and Pordenone advancing along the narrow footpath.

Pordenone was gesticulating forcibly and—I could hear—explaining, with much volubility, his readiness and ability to repay the bank's losses.

While he was speaking, his shifty black eyes were peering on all sides, and it seemed to me that he was talking simply to gain time, and so carry his companion further away from the public road and into the solitude.

Mr. Fitzgerald's right hand firmly grasped Pordenone's coat collar, and there was an unwonted grimness in the set of his mouth and in the flash of his eyes, as he said with much determination:

"Pordenone, you must find me the money to-night, or I will have you arrested. I will not let you out of my sight until that lost money is repaid."

In my dream I could see again and

again Pordenone's hand steal toward the belt in which as he moved could be seen the handle of his stiletto. I tried to call out and warn Mr. Fitzgerald, but my tongue was powerless.

Instantly the moon became obscured—I could no longer see anything but I heard a prolonged "Ah—h—h" and the sound of scuffling feet. I thought I burst through the intervening branches toward the combatants, but my foot caught in a projecting root and I fell heavily to the earth.

The shock of the imaginary fall awoke me, to find the early rays of the morning sun stealing through the Venetian blinds.

The hour was 5.30, and if I intended to warn the gardener it was time I was bestirring myself.

My dream had left a very powerful impression on my mind, and painful as powerful; still it added to my former convictions that we were on the eve of some startling discovery.

On entering the grounds I found Giovanni seated listlessly in a summer-house, smoking a cigar.

The momentary embarrassment, which was, I fancy, felt mutually, soon

wore off. He inquired, with some anxiety, how the wound in my shoulder was progressing, and seemed much relieved when I reassured him as to its being a mere scratch.

"Have you been out of doors long?" I inquired.

"I have not been to bed," was his somewhat surprising reply.

"I could not sleep," he slowly exclaimed; adding with a touch of bitterness which sounded half humorous, half pathetic, "I feel as if I should never sleep again."

"Ah, you do not know," he began excitedly—"how *could* you know, what I feel? You are young, and for you every bright flower that springs along your path has a beautiful look and a sweet perfume; and you are delighted and enchanted with every step of your life's way. If you stoop to pluck one flower and you find that you do not like it on closer sight, or if some one says to you, 'Stay! that flower is mine,' you shrug your shoulders and say the world is full of prettier flowers, and you think so—mind you—deep down in your own heart, and so nothing worries you or eats into your heart—mark you—like

vitriol—as something is eating into *my* heart now.”

“I am very sorry for you, Giovanni, but I do not think you ought to despair. When Miss Bonanette shall have shaken off the dread of Pordenone which is embittering her life, she will be able to see things differently. When a man is scared to death he has no time to think of love, and it is the same with a woman. Now, if you could be the means of ridding Miss Bonanette of her fear of that monster Pordenone, you would earn her life-long gratitude, and that would be one step toward her affection.”

While I spoke Giovanni's wearied eyes began to brighten, and he hung on my words with an anxiety which was quite painful to notice. Then the light died out from his eyes, and he said, sadly, and with some gentle bitterness in his tone:

“No; I feel it is out of the question. I am too old. I never was what you English call handsome, and now I am ugly and I am old, old at least for her. I have given my best days to the worship of my art—my eyesight, my strength, until lately even my very

soul; now I am too old to learn the ways by which woman's love is won, and it is as hopeless for me to live without Miss Bonanette as it is hopeless to win her love."

Perhaps there are men to whom all this would have seemed a ridiculous and unmanly display of feeling, men who would have heard it with an air of ill-disguised contempt. For myself, I am not ashamed to confess it, I saw only a heart-broken, despairing man, drinking the dregs of one of life's bitterest cups; and, when I turned away, there was a mist in my eyes which dimmed and blurred the morning landscape.

I did not then know—none of us knew—that under an exterior which was less homely than peculiar, Giovanni carried with him an artistic soul which Italy should one day exhaust itself to honor, but so it was. Could we have glanced only a little way into the future we would have seen King Victor Emmanuel lavishing upon our heart-broken friend the highest honors at his command, and Italy, the home of art, kneeling before him, as the latest of her great and world-renowned artists. The work

which was to win him such fame was already almost finished. He had been laboring at it for years and must have known its merits, but to him—sick unto death in the hopelessness of a consuming passion—no doubt the approaching triumph seemed bitter to the taste as Dead Sea fruit.

As I turned my gaze away I saw the gardener crossing the lawn in the direction of the snake-house, a sight which reminded me suddenly of the object of my early appearance.

Hastily excusing myself to Giovanni, I followed Saunders, the head gardener, whom I overtook as he was about to enter the reptile-house. Having explained to him that the anaconda had been seen at large in the house the previous evening, in a dangerous mood, I said I thought he had better feed the brute before he went in to see the other snakes.

The cooler air of the early morning had induced the anaconda to retreat to his lair, and through the glass we could see his huge bulk only partially covered by the rugs. Saunders seemed doubtful as to what he ought to feed the snake with, whether a fowl, or a sheep;

and his long face lightened sensibly when I suggested that Mr. Marangilo's friend, who had presented the animal, lived near by and could no doubt advise him. Saunders decided that he would call and ask the gentleman as soon as his morning's work was finished.

Having relieved my mind with reference to the huge constrictor, I retraced my steps toward the house.

On re-entering I overheard Marangilo's voice raised in anger. Instead of this creating any surprise, the sound caused me to smile. Mr. Marangilo was one of those heavily built, solid looking men, with thick white skin and colorless complexion. The sallow skin was relieved by the dark eyes and dense black hair and beard, and the eyes were, in the early morning, apt to be bilious looking. When I confronted Mr. Marangilo his morning face was still lowering with the storm of passion into which he had worked himself, and his colorless lips trembled as the terrific freight of broken and maimed English and Italian rolled, dashed, stumbled, and spluttered through their quivering gateway. What was all the storm about? Oh, nothing special. Mr.

Marangilo, like all other men of bilious and lymphatic temperament, ought to have seen that the world was well aired each morning before setting foot in it. He never did so, and as a consequence the morning barometer at Monkswell never registered aught else but "stormy" before 10 A.M. Knowing this peculiarity of her otherwise agreeable and admirable spouse, Madame Marangilo, with rare discretion, never came down stairs to breakfast. After she had discussed the morning meal in her chamber, and after her maid had completed her toilet, the hour was usually eleven, and the household barometer down stairs at "set fair" for the rest of the day.

On this particular morning Mr. Marangilo had lost his temper with the coachman over some trifling matter; but every one knew that the storm would burst in any case, and neither the servant who bore the brunt of the attack, nor any one else, not even Mr. Marangilo, was likely to remember it after it was over.

As I passed, I heard the coachman say, "I *did* close the postern gate, sir, but I saw a gentleman open it and come

in after eleven last night, and I noticed that he left the gate ajar."

Marangilo's jaw dropped a little at this, and his next question came in a tone which, in comparison, was subdued and hushed.

"Where were you?"

"I was in my rooms, sir, over the stables."

"Wh—what was the man like?"

"I could hardly say, sir; he wore a very broad, wide-awake hat, low down on his head, and he had a dark plaid around his shoulders and neck, so I could not see any part of his face, it was so shaded and covered."

"Did he come up the walk?"

"No, sir, he stopped in the shade of one of the box trees, and seemed to study all the windows."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, my wife called me at that moment, and when I returned he was gone, and I thought he had left, as it was so late and all the front lights were out."

Mr. Marangilo relapsed into silence, and I noticed as he relit his meerschaum pipe that his hand trembled. The conversation had arrested my attention,

and at this point I bade my host good morning, and expressed a hope that the late hours of the previous evening had not overtired him. He, I suppose, saw that my gaze had been attracted by his shaking fingers, and he somewhat surprised me by saying:

“Oh, that is nothing—it is the usual sculptor’s quiver, and comes from the prolonged tension of the hand in doing delicate chiselling.”

“Is that all, sir?” It was the servant who spoke, and he referred to himself and not to the conversation.

“Yes, you can go. Your mistress will want you to drive her and Miss Bonanette into London—in the victoria—at half-past two to-day.”

As Mr. Marangilo appeared to be in a preoccupied frame of mind I left him, after reminding him to give directions as to the searching of the pond, to which he agreed, it seemed to me, in an absent-minded way.

Breakfast saw neither of the ladies, and our conversation languished. Marangilo, I could see, was still thinking of the strange visitor—a fact of some significance to many Neapolitans—while Giovanni’s “eyes were with his heart,

and that was far away." As for myself, my startling dream was a potentiality which filled my heart with a maddening desire to shorten the meal and hasten to the pond.

Our souls—all of them—were little islands of turmoil as widely separated from each other as if oceans rolled between them. The stolid servant who waited seemed to find some expression for his usually inscrutable and apathetic face—a look of wonder at our silence. He was accustomed, among the volatile Italians, to every mood but silence, and our preoccupation disturbed him.

The deep French windows of the great dining-room, where we breakfasted, were open, and to and fro across the boxes of mignonette which covered the sills and perfumed the room with its delicious breath the bees passed harmlessly and industriously out and in, filling the otherwise silent air with the melody of their low music. It was a day for the *dolce far niente* of existence—a day for a hammock in a grateful shade and the revel of a long-hoarded volume of a favorite author.

And yet to me the beauty of that summer morning was almost madden-

ing. I felt as the poetess might have felt when she sang, "Ye'll break my heart, ye warbling birds," my spirits were so ill-attuned to the day. I experienced a sense of incongruity existing between the day and its pending discovery—if my judgment and my dream were to prove correct.

At length—to our individual relief—the meal ended, and without loss of time we started for the pond. Two hours before, Joe, one of the grooms, had been dispatched to Putney for a cast-net and some grappling irons, and Saunders had sent down to the pond an old punt. A number of planks had also been sent down to enable us, as far as possible, to avoid the slush and ooze of the marsh, as they could be rested on the small islets.

The two dogs accompanied us—Hector taking his place by my side.

The marsh and pond lay quiet in the sunlight, the water-rats and frogs being asleep in their abodes. Brilliant butterflies flitted from dotted mound to mound, attracted by the gaudy flowers which the rich damp soil nourished and flaunted in the wind. Across the pond the great beech towered among

the shrubs, and on a dead limb which stretched out from the trunk a huge raven sat, every now and again altering his place with a sidelong hop, a flutter of the broad black funereal wing, and a hoarse double croak.

Our first visit was to the spot where I found the previous relic, but a careful examination of all that part revealed nothing more. Seldom, probably, has a bright summer day been devoted to a more repulsive task than ransacking those miry and horrid depths.

After we had examined three sides of the marsh, foot by foot, we essayed the pond itself. As we pushed the punt through the rushes which lined its edge and tore through the veil of green slime which covered its surface there, the raven, which had been watching us keenly through all our disheartening search, startled us all with a treble croak, which seemed to our horrified ears like a gigantic and diabolical "Ha! Ha!! Ha!!!"

I feigned to throw a stone at him, but there was none within reach, and he acknowledged the futile action by a slight hop and flutter, and a renewal of his hoarse expression of unearthly glee.

With net and grappling hook we, at length, had satisfied ourselves that there was no secret in those depths which we cared to unravel—and the prospects of the success of our quest were to me growing distressingly dark.

We were now on the further side of the pond—the side, I reflected, with a slight renewal of hope, nearest to the Putney footpath.

Black clouds had been gathering for some time, and a heavy downpour of rain seemed imminent. In silence, and, except on my part, in utter hopelessness, the remaining marsh was scoured, foot by foot, until the last inch had been examined.

Without comment Marangilo and Giovanni handed their grappling irons to the under-gardener and groom who had accompanied us, and as these articles rang against the bottom of the punt into which they were presently thrown, the startled raven in our near vicinity responded with a hoarse and angry croak.

While we were arranging to return, a sudden downpour of rain, a perfect tropical thunder-shower, came on, with the result that we all hastily stepped

under the shade of the great beech-tree, close at hand.

The gardener and groom, who preferred their own company, took the other side of the massive trunk, while we stood, motionless and silent, looking out onto the surface of the pools which the rain was lashing almost into a foam.

I stood a little apart, thinking that the dripping and wretched condition of the raven who sat overhead in the wet might be fairly considered as representing my inner frame of mind, now fully dejected and utterly disconsolate.

"Where are all my superstitions now?" I muttered, half aloud; "the blood-red pool, the index hand, aye—and the dream of last night?—all miserable hallucinations."

"Please, sir—will you come here?"

The unexpected appeal startled me, and my excitement increased when I saw the scared face of the groom who had accosted me. "I think what we have been searching for is on the other side of the tree."

That was all he said—but as my mind slowly apprehended the fact, my courage oozed away out of my finger-

ends, at my knee-joints, and in the clammy moisture which suddenly beaded my forehead.

I caught hold of a projecting branch to steady myself as I came in sight of the object which had scared all the color from the faces of the gardener and the groom.

And this is what met my straining and horrified gaze—a human skeleton, clad here and there in the habiliments of life, and minus the first two fingers of the right hand.

The body had fallen or been thrown face downward, so that the attitude was that of a man asleep with his face between his arms.

The spot where we found the remains stood high and dry from the water, and it is probable that it had not been exposed to any moisture beyond that of the winter rain and the dews. The clothing was still in many places fresh looking, and I could beyond doubt distinguish the overcoat of light material and the dark frock coat worn by Mr. Fitzgerald.

I was stunned and giddy from the shock of discovery, even although I had imagined myself fully prepared for it.

At length my quest was ended. Here, in the shade of this gloomy tree, surrounded by the nightly calls of earth's most grewsome creatures, and with only the hoarse cry of an unhallowed raven for a requiem—here had lain the dead body of my dearest friend on earth, while calumny and hatred had eaten away his reputation, as the water-rat and the worm had fattened on his flesh. As I thought of the long years, the summers and the winters, the springs and the autumns, through which all that remained of the brightest, gentlest and most tender of friends had lain here untended and unwept over, the tears rushed to my eyes.

The discovery, which I thought would be an event of relief and rest and chastened joy, was, instead, an occasion for the keenest grief and the bitterest rage and hate.

Acting under my directions, the assistants transferred the mournful relics onto a species of stretcher provided for such a contingency. As they turned the body to place it in a better position, I saw that the front of the necktie, which had been sheltered from the rain, was in good preservation, and I also

saw, with distended eyes and a brain benumbed with astonishment, the cameo pin which Mr. Fitzgerald had worn when I saw him last!

Of the journey back to the house I recall nothing; I was in a dazed and bewildered state; I thought my wits must have left me. All that I could think of was the cameo pin, identified on the Continent along with the diamond cluster ring, and yet here, all the time, on the dead man's neck.

Suddenly—we were in the library—I heard the servant say to Mr. Marangilo, “A gentleman to see you, sir.”

“What is his name?”

“I cannot pronounce it, sir, and as he had no card, I asked him to write it down.”

Saying this, he handed the name to Mr. Marangilo, who glanced at it, then slowly raising his head himself announced it, in awe-stricken tones, “Giuseppe Pordenone!”



CHAPTER X.

GIUSEPPE PORDENONE.

SLOWLY, and in a half-dazed condition, Mr. Marangilo crushed in his hand the paper bearing the ominous name of the man whom we now believed had added murder to the brimming cup of his iniquities. Recollecting, however, the presence of the servant, he endeavored to control himself, but simultaneously with the order which he presently gave to the man, he flashed a look almost of entreaty to Giovanni and myself, which seemed to say, "Am I doing right?"

"Show the gentleman into the drawing-room and say that I will see him in a few minutes—and, stay—close the drawing-room door as you come out."

"Yes, sir."

The moment the servant had left the room Giovanni and I sprang to our feet. Over Marangilo's face a look of dread was spreading. His sybaritish life had unfitted him for anything like

a scene, and with Pordenone on the boards he rightly judged that the pace was likely to be fast while it lasted, more especially if any attempt was made to secure the murderer.

With Giovanni it was different. A wave of triumph lit up the sad eyes and transformed the entire man. Across Pordenone's body—metaphorically speaking, if not indeed in reality—lay his only path to Miss Bonanette's affection, and his lately developed despair had been deepened by the apparent impossibility of ever finding track of the villain. Hence the unexpected arrival had electrified him into new life and hope.

For myself, the feelings which possessed me were, to a great extent, indescribable. I felt internally somewhat as the victim of a sudden tornado or whirlwind feels externally, when the buffeting and cross-countering, the rending and driving and twisting of the combatant elements seem to meet in his person, threatening to leave him featureless and limbless, and when they have deadened his every sense with the clamor and fury of their turmoil. In my mind conflicting emotions raged,

leaving me weak and spent with their fury. Giovanni's hate was only of recent growth, and its origin and possible remedy were direct and free from complication.

With me it was different; my wrongs were the accumulation of years—years tinged and saddened and embittered by the acts of this man whom, it seemed, a just Fate had at last delivered into our hands.

Whether it was that Marangilo was naturally a brave man and his lapse of courage but the momentary result of a somewhat enervating life, or whether the anger of Giovanni and myself was contagious, I cannot say, but our host soon got over his alarm and showed every disposition to aid us in our expressed intention to secure Pordenone.

The decision we arrived at was that Marangilo should see Pordenone and detain him as long as he could without suspicion; that I should meantime send a dispatch to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police at Scotland Yard, requesting that Putnam, the detective formerly employed to capture Pordenone, should be sent on at once to arrest him. Putnam I knew to be still

on the force, and my only fear was that he might be absent. To avoid any undue delay from this cause, I added to my telegram a request for another detective to be sent in the event of Putnam's absence—and finally, by way of a postscriptum, I urged the necessity of obtaining a warrant for suspected murder should, from any cause, the warrant obtained in 1866 be now inoperative.

While we were still debating as to the best means of getting the telegram off quickly and without exciting the suspicion of Pordenone, now in the drawing-room—of which two windows commanded the front entrance to the house—Madam Marangilo entered, dressed for her afternoon drive. She was unconscious of Pordenone's arrival, and she came into the library to inquire whether her husband had any commissions to execute in town. "The carriage," she said, "has been waiting some time."

This statement at once excited our alarm, and the question which it raised seemed to spring from all the male lips present at once.

"Has Miss Bonanette taken her seat yet?"

"No; she said she would wait for me in the drawing-room."

This terrible and yet exceedingly probable contingency had been quite unforeseen—and it caused the utmost consternation. Already, for aught we knew, Pordenone and Miss Bonanette had met, in which case it might be that our intended prisoner had escaped while we were planning his capture—and it was by no means beyond possibility that a tragedy had taken place. This latter fact appealed probably most powerfully to myself, as no one knew so well as I did the state of uncontrollable excitement into which the mere presence of Pordenone was likely to throw Miss Bonanette; and no one now knew better than I did the utter recklessness and remorselessness of the villain himself.

In our eager haste to ascertain what had happened, Giovanni and I reached the door together, much to the surprise of our hostess, who, in a large and placid way, had no sympathy with erratic conduct.

"Stay here, I know more about this than you do," I almost hissed as our opposing hands simultaneously clutched at the door-handle.

The old, dangerous, jealous look came into Giovanni's eyes; but when I added, "Remember what I told you and leave things to me," he reluctantly fell back and let me pass through the door.

Three steps away was the entrance to the main hall, which commanded a view of the drawing-room door, some seventy or eighty feet away. On my way to the drawing-room I passed the front door, where I noticed the empty victoria with the driver on his seat and the footman standing by the carriage door. As I passed quickly onward I was startled by the sudden touch, or rather clutch, of a hand as I crossed the entrance to the billiard-room. The room was lit from the roof, but the blinds had been drawn, and it was somewhat in the shade, so that at first I could only see imperfectly as I turned quickly. Stepping without hesitation to the door, I stood face to face with Miss Bonanette. Even in the shade I could see that she was in a state of great excitement, and I felt that she had either seen Pordenone or had learned of his presence. Unconscious of everything but the desperate danger which she thought menaced her, she

grasped me by the arm and drew me out of the hallway into the room, while in her excitement she could scarcely frame the words which seemed struggling to her lips.

"Do you know who is in there? Pordenone! I have seen him. Oh, don't deny it! I opened the door a few minutes ago—he did not hear me. He was standing with his back to the entrance, but I could see his reflection in the mirror. He is there, and you told me he would *never* come here—and, poor fool that I was, I trusted you, and felt happier in consequence."

As soon as I could find opportunity to speak I begged Miss Bonanette to retire to her room at once, reassuring her that steps would be taken that day to prevent Pordenone from troubling her again, provided he did not see her.

She saw the pink telegram in my hand, and her eyes looked eager inquiry.

"Yes," I said, replying to the glance, "this has to do with him." As the telegram seemed to imply that we were taking some active measures in her behalf, Miss Bonanette became quieter and eventually retired to her room,

which I entreated her not to leave until we should send her a line saying that she might do so with safety.

As I turned to retrace my steps to the library I could hear the sharp click as the bolt turned in the lock of Miss Bonanette's door.

Re-entering the library, I informed the anxious group that so far all was well; and Madame Marangilo, seeing the telegram in my hand, solved our earlier difficulty by saying that she would leave it at Scotland Yard herself, and, if possible, bring back the detective in the carriage with her. This prompt and unexpected means of escape out of our difficulties relieved us vastly. Mr. Marangilo had, it appeared, given his wife an outline of the situation during my absence.

In a few minutes Marangilo accompanied his wife to the carriage to disarm all suspicion, and then leisurely entered the drawing-room to greet Pordenone, while, according to arrangement, Giovanni and I went upstairs to my rooms to perfect our plans.

Marangilo, I noticed, had placed a revolver in his breast-pocket as he was leaving the room.

After we had been upstairs a few minutes a servant announced that luncheon had been served for the second time. This new complication we got over by requesting the servant to bring us up some sandwiches and sherry, as it was too late in the day for a regular luncheon. We could scarcely imagine ourselves breaking bread or sharing the salt—those sacred institutions—with Pordenone, it might be, whom we had every intention of handing over to justice.

As we stood at the windows talking in low tones, I experienced one of those depressing revulsions of feeling which are the terror of minds firmly resolved upon a desperate course. It seemed to me then that I had no real proof that this man Pordenone had committed any murder—no proof that would weigh for a second with a British jury. Impressions, suspicions, dreams, and superstitions I had in abundance, but these, instead of helping my case against Pordenone in court, would have an opposite effect, as showing an animus against the man, and an attempt to build up an accusation on grounds not only not recognizable in law, but very much con-

demned by it. Even the cameo pin, the sole link which might have connected Pordenone with Mr. Fitzgerald's death, had failed me miserably, seeing that it had been found on the dead body. Nor could the theory of murder be sustained before a cold and unbelieving jury, whose only creed was that such things did not happen in England. The skeleton, so far as could be seen, gave no indications of the cause of death. It is true no real examination had been made; and this thought suggested the disagreeable reflection that I had probably been guilty of a grave impropriety in removing the skeleton before it had been seen by the police. In following out this displeasing train of thought, I lapsed into silence and stood impatiently drumming against the window-pane with my fingers.

Suddenly Giovanni spoke.

"Graham, I cannot wait, I *must* know what is going on downstairs. I am afraid Marangilo is weak enough to let Pordenone explain away all his crimes, as he did before."

As Giovanni moved towards the door, the servant appeared with the luncheon, and I induced the impatient Italian to

wait a few minutes longer and swallow a glass of sherry.

After returning to the window, and while slowly discussing our sandwiches, Giovanni suddenly directed my attention to a slight movement under one of the trees which lined the public road. The movement was, perhaps, fifty yards to the left of the entrance to Monks-well.

"That is a hansom cab, and it is waiting for Pordenone; if we are not careful, he will be off and away before we are aware of it."

Saying this, Giovanni noiselessly raised one of the windows to enable him to obtain a wider view. As he did so we became conscious of voices. Two men were evidently talking on the entrance steps. Of one the voice was distinctly recognizable. It was Marangilo's. The other's tones were lower, but we did not care to discuss the ownership; we knew no other than Pordenone could be the second speaker.

Giovanni instantly flashed me a look which said plainer than words, "Didn't I tell you so?" and he plunged headlong for the stairs, while I followed with rather less precipitation.

The heavily carpeted marble stairs gave out no audible sound as Giovanni hurried down, and I could see, as I came in view of the group, that his unexpected appearance had somewhat startled Pordenone, who naturally hated surprises, since they were likely to be eminently dangerous to his personal safety.

I was somewhat curious to see how Giovanni would greet Pordenone, and I felt thoroughly vexed at the way in which he appeared to be determined to force our hands. My fears were groundless. Giovanni seemed transformed to a new creature, endowed with all the suppleness, suavity, and *empressement* of his countrymen.

Rushing up to Pordenone, with beaming eyes, he exclaimed with a "*gush*" only born of Italian skies: "*Pordenone!*" The name was nothing, the tone and accent everything and indescribable, they were so radiant with welcome. Linking his arm affectionately in that of Pordenone, Giovanni drew him indoors with a light smile and many gay, bantering expressions.

"Going away? never, *never* — come into the library, I have a thousand questions to ask you about our old friends—

why, your very clothes smell of dear old Naples!"

Pordenone protested, but his protests were useless—the usually quiet and retiring Giovanni was perfectly overwhelming in his affectionate persistence, and Pordenone succumbed, with much visible uneasiness and surprise. Arm in arm the two entered the library, the face of the one radiant with delight and welcome, that of the other cold, suspicious, fearful, with only a slight veneer of a society smile dislocating the saturnine wrinkles which a life of unredeemed and unrepented wickedness had carved here and there on his countenance, like danger signals on an ocean chart.

I had thus far remained unseen; and, as it was not likely that the detective could reach Monkswell for an hour and a half yet, I wished, if possible, to delay my meeting with Pordenone. I did not for a moment doubt that he would identify me when we did meet. As I reflected upon this, I saw Marangilo enter the library and join the other two. I thought he appeared somewhat uneasy and perturbed. There was no fear that Giovanni would lose sight of Por-

denone, so I determined to return to my room and await the arrival of the detective.

How slowly the time passed! It seemed to me that there must be a combination of all the clocks in the house to lag behind that afternoon, and that my watch had joined in the vile conspiracy.

Suddenly I heard a gentle tap at my door, and, on opening it, I found Miss Bonanette, with set lips and eyes all aflame with passion. As I closed the door of my room and stepped out into the passage, she pointed to a large-windowed alcove facing the park, placing her finger on her lips in token of silence as she did so. As we entered the curtained *portière* together she drew me to the window and pointed into the grounds.

"What is *that?*" she exclaimed in a low, suppressed tone.

The object she was looking at was the body of Mr. Fitzgerald, which could be seen though the glass roof of the outhouse, where we had placed it. Although decently covered, the outline of the body was too human to admit of any misapprehension.

"I saw them bring it in. It is the dead body which you were looking for, is it not, that of your friend whom Giuseppe Pordenone killed?"

She came so close to me in her eagerness that her warm breath swept my cheek as she spoke. The transformation in her was complete. The downcast, expectant air of apprehension was entirely gone. She was still dressed for the drive as Pordenone's arrival had found her; and as she stood before me in the pride and glory of her womanhood, I doubted whether all the millions of London town that day included such another specimen of peerless beauty.

I signified assent; and then recalling the mystery of the cameo, I told Miss Bonanette that we had found on the body a pin identical with that formerly in her possession during the "Captain Mortimer" episode.

As I alluded to that evil time of her "reign of terror," an almost imperceptible flush tinged her cheek, and her eyes and lips hardened anew, as it seemed, in some desperate resolve.

"No doubt Pordenone made a duplicate."

That was all Miss Bonanette said,

but the manner of the reply entirely convinced me of its genuineness, and it lifted a heavy burden from my mind. I wondered I had not thought of such a possibility before.

Feeling that I had deeply wronged Miss Bonanette in my suspicions about the cameo pin, I hastened to make amends by confiding to her what we intended to do about Pordenone. She listened in silence, but her expressive eyes seemed to annotate every sentence as it fell from my lips.

"He will never be taken alive! Have you a pistol?"

That was her simple comment, and I replied that I had not, but that Mr. Marangilo had.

"Oh, Mr. Marangilo!" and for a second the red lips parted in a half-scornful smile, which just showed the beautiful teeth. "Poor, dear Mr. Marangilo, he is too fat and slow altogether; you had better tell him to give Mr. Giovanni his pistol and I will bring you one."

Saying this, and desiring me to wait for her, she parted the curtains and left the alcove. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an hour passed, and still Miss Bonanette returned not.

At last, as I was preparing to leave the alcove to try and discover the cause of her absence, I heard the *frou-frou* of a silk dress across the passage, and Miss Bonanette stood before me with a look of unmistakable triumph in her eyes.

"What delayed you?" I asked with some anxiety.

"I was telling Joe the correct time and seeing that he set his watch by mine."

The reply was, to say the least, ambiguous, and it was rendered more so by the sinister expression which accompanied it. I began to feel a little uneasy and to dread that the lady's impulsiveness was going to endanger our success.

Miss Bonanette carried in her hand a richly inlaid pistol-case, from which she took an exquisitely mounted and very serviceable-looking revolver, which she handed to me, merely remarking that I had better load with fresh cartridges, which I at once did after removing the old shells.

"It is now half-past four o'clock," said Miss Bonanette, watch in hand. "If a detective is forthcoming, he will be here in fifteen minutes. I know Madame

Marangilo better than you do. She will drive to Scotland Yard as fast as her horses will carry her. The drive there and back will not take more than an hour and a half, allowing, at the utmost, half an hour for any delay at Scotland Yard and in securing a warrant, and the carriage ought to be back here at fifteen minutes to five. If Madam Marangilo does not return by that time, we will confront Pordenone without further delay. *I have arranged things!"*

Miss Bonanette's new and extraordinary vigor benumbed my faculties. I sat down despairingly on the lounge, overlooking the grounds, pondering the incongruities of womankind. Delicate, sensitive, timid, these qualities represented Miss Bonanette as I had known her up to the present time; now all that was changed, and the campaign against Pordenone had found a new leader in the woman whose heart a few days ago would almost have stopped beating at the mere whisper of his name.

The sex was an unknown quantity—most dangerous when apparently most helpless—strongest when weakest. As I turned and looked at the superb fig-

ure by my side full of energy and resolve, I marvelled at the "force" of a timid feminine nature when thoroughly "wound up."

The sound of carriage-wheels disturbed my reverie and brought me to my feet in haste. From the window in my room I could see the victoria enter the carriage-sweep, and my heart gave a bound of relief when I saw Putnam's well-remembered figure.

"Putnam, the detective, is here," I remarked to Miss Bonanette as I passed the alcove. Her reply was a gentle, almost imperceptible, smile; and as I was turning away she held out her hand with a frank and winning air, and her voice was full of pathos when she spoke.

"Let me thank you for what you have done for me. We hardly know how the day will end yet, and I may not have another opportunity of telling you how much I appreciate your kindness."

As her hand rested in mine for a moment, a vision of Giovanni's pale, wan face came between Miss Bonanette's beautiful eyes and myself. As I thought of his overmastering passion

I took a sudden resolve. Gently detaining Miss Bonanette's hand, I said: "There is tragedy in the air. Looking at this uncertainty, forgive me for saying that if any human life is lost to-day it will probably be Giovanni's. He is aware that Pordenone is the blight of your life. This knowledge is likely to make him reckless, and in any collision with Pordenone he is hardly likely to be able to take care of himself."

"Oh, no, *no*, it must not be!" almost screamed Miss Bonanette, throwing her hands upward in despair. "Pordenone was the strongest man and most expert duellist with rapier or dagger in all Naples. He will surely kill Mr. Giovanni."

But now I heard steps in the hall, and I explained to Miss Bonanette that I must see Putnam before he saw Pordenone.

I had not seen Putnam for some years, and the meeting between us was cordial in the extreme. After a few minutes' conversation, we decided that we had better enter the library together.

As we did so Pordenone turned and faced us abruptly. As his eyes fell upon Putnam they assumed a troubled,

puzzled expression. Suddenly recalling the face, however, he showed his wolflike teeth in an ominous grin of welcome.

"Mr. Putnam, the detective," said he slowly, his eyes scanning the faces around him;—"and, ah! the young banker, too," with a sardonic smile as his glance fell upon myself. "This is an unexpected pleasure. Monsieur Putnam, you show a great fondness for this old comedy, but you have not yet learned to play it quite successfully; you want some more lessons from me, I fear."

His eyes were now on the hall door, but any idea of escape that way was prevented by the entrance of Madame Marangilo, who calmly placed her ample figure against the door, barring it effectually. An instant later Miss Bonanette entered from another door. In the glance which passed between the latter and Pordenone it was the man's eyes which quailed, but only for a moment. A look of indescribable insolence and menace flashed an instant later upon Miss Bonanette and then swept the room. When he saw the changed expression of the faces of Ma-

rangilo and Giovanni and recognized the trap into which he had walked, he abated his hardihood not one jot.

Putnam, who had drawn the warrant from his pocket, asked him whether he would accompany him quietly.

"What do you want me for?" he inquired, with an air of indifference.

"For forgery in 1866."

A smile of derision crossed Pordene's face as he heard this.

"No, not for forgery—for the murder of Mr. Fitzgerald, down in that pond, on the night of the 11th May, 1866. See, there is his body!"

It was Miss Bonanette, whose voice rang through the room, startling us all; and as she ceased speaking she pointed to the window where Joe and an assistant held the covered remains on a stretcher. This, then, was the purpose for which Joe's watch had been set.





CHAPTER XI.

THE ATTEMPTED CAPTURE.

ALTHOUGH great beads of moisture gathered on Pordenone's forehead, he retained his wonderful composure and his face was firm and even still sarcastic as he replied:

"No doubt you have some proofs that I killed him."

"I saw you murder him," I exclaimed (devoutly hoping that the mental reservation "in my dream" would be allowable, and that, in the scare of the moment, he would not reflect on the improbability of the remains being there at the window if I had actually seen the murder committed at the time). "You killed him in the short-cut to Putney in front of the large hazel-bush, and you then carried his body and left it under the great beech-tree at the pond."

Pordenone was silent for a minute. The room was a large one; it was

entered by three doors, two of which were guarded, each by a man with a revolver in his hand, and the third Giovanni protected with his knife. The detective had also drawn his revolver. These precautions seemed needless, but the man's resources were too boundless to justify the omission of any precaution.

Pordenone was now thoroughly imprisoned. Slowly reviewing the group, as if assuring himself that there was absolutely no escape, and giving each of us in passing a special glance of malignance, he quietly thrust his right hand into his coat pocket, an action instantly followed by the click of three revolvers as their individual hammers were raised.

He smiled as he placed a small box on the table wrapped up in tissue paper. The paper looked like a two-ounce packet of smoking tobacco; and when he inquired with effrontery whether the ladies objected to smoking, we were simply speechless with indignation. Meantime he quietly undid the tissue-paper, disclosing, apparently, a package of tobacco, gathered like a purse at the opening.

"Stop this tomfoolery and come quietly," said Putnam, in a voice suffocated with passion; but Pordenone waved him back, saying gently, "Just one minute, sir; *then* you can take me wherever you like."

The change in tone surprised us, and Putnam fell back for a moment. Proceeding leisurely about it, Pordenone next struck a match and quietly taking up the package, to fill his pipe from it, as we supposed, he deftly undid a fuse in its purse-like mouth and quickly ignited it. Then looking up with a glance of triumph in his eyes, but in a strangely quiet tone, he said; "I have always been prepared for such an event. This is a twenty-second fuse, and the little box is an infernal machine which will save you any further trouble about myself."

The scene which thereupon ensued beggars description. Within the space of the next five seconds Marangilo and madame, his wife,—and alas! for the valiant detective force—also Putnam, were flying across the lawn to seek the shelter of a great oak-tree there.

Inside the library, Giovanni and I had also turned to go when we noticed

that Miss Bonanette stood still, regarding Pordenone with a look of hatred such as, even on the brink of destruction, appalled us.

"Come!" Giovanni and I called as we endeavored to seize her and carry her from the fated room. But she eluded our grasp, and drawing a small dagger which she carried she rushed toward Pordenone who was standing on the further side of the long table.

Quicker than light Giovanni bounded past me, seized the infernal machine, and raising it to his mouth inserted the sputtering and glowing fragment of the fuse between his teeth, closing his lips tightly upon the remaining portion.

Hours seemed compressed into the few seconds which elapsed before Giovanni withdrew the charred and extinguished fuse from his mouth. Not a line in his face showed the mental as well as physical agony which he must have endured; only a great whiteness, and in the eyes a furnace-like glow.

"No, Pordenone, it is not in that way that you and I shall part. You used to be a brave man. Villain! defend yourself!" and stooping over his enemy Giovanni struck him full in the face with

his open hand. Then calmly, methodically, as if clearing the room for a dance, he pushed the chairs out of the way, while he asked me to help him to move back the heavy table, which I did.

Miss Bonanette, whose attack upon Pordenone had been arrested by the act of Giovanni in extinguishing the fuse, now looked on with much complacency, and a delicate pink flush began to grow in either cheek. Remembering what she had said upstairs about Pordenone's skill, I was at a loss to understand how she should thus allow Giovanni to go to his death.

When Pordenone received the taunting challenge and the blow, the only sign of consciousness which he gave of the insult was a slight shiver. I am inclined to think that his death having been firmly decided upon in his own mind, had already, after a fashion, commenced, and that he had, as it were, to summon himself back to life before he could fully realize his position.

Moving slowly to his feet with a certain decorum of composure, he began, mechanically, and as one in a dream, to remove his coat and vest, and to prepare himself for the combat. All the

while his eyes wore a strange, unseeing look. If any vision was focussed within those staring orbs, it was painfully evident that it was not the scene of which we formed a part. The fixed glance of the somnambulist, the introverted gaze of the suicide, the dreadful look which, on the scaffold, the murderer projects into the dark future which already awaits his unhallowed soul, all these apparently opposite characteristics seemed comprised in that stony glare. And yet it could not be said that there was any corresponding terror in the glance; on the contrary, as the expression shifted somewhat, the look of fixed apprehension was succeeded by a certain recklessness of courage, as if the doomed man had measured the worst and did not quail before it.

Gradually, in the time in which it might be told, Pordenone's aspect changed. He had for many years been a man of desperate fortunes, and he was not slow to adapt himself to changed conditions. The sight of Giovanni, dagger in hand, recalled the last of his scattered thoughts, and he drew his own weapon with an air of dawning relief,

as if he welcomed the diversion from thoughts ten thousand times more gloomy.

Giovanni had already prepared himself for the strange old-world duel. The dagger was no longer an orthodox weapon in affairs of honor, but the employment of it in such contests had lingered in Naples longer than elsewhere, and both men, in different degrees, were familiar with the use of it. After all, this was no duel, but a fight to the death, regardless of the laws of any code of honor.

When the two men stood face to face with each other, Pordenone was entirely himself again; and as the light flashed from his blade to his eyes I noticed in the latter that strange look which, in the anaconda in the snake-house, had reminded Miss Bonanette and myself of him.

If the two men stood long facing each other, it seemed to me that Pordenone must petrify Giovanni where he stood by the mere magnetism of his eyes. Even to an onlooker their appearance had a peculiar and repelling fascination. This expression seems a contradiction of terms, but it describes accurately

the effect which his eyes had upon myself. They seemed to be weaving a net round Giovanni, and for the moment I thought of a huge tropical spider which on a Southern visit I had observed forming a gigantic web in the brilliant moonlight. As the great creature, with marvellous fleetness and activity, rushed along its lines, and threw a thread now here, now there, until its web had embraced three trees in its supports and had itself assumed the dimensions of an expanded cast-net, so the fire seemed to retreat and advance from Pordenone's eyes, each flash casting another cable round Giovanni's will.

But Giovanni had a stanch ally in Miss Bonanette. Whether she saw the impending danger or not, I cannot say, but, with a quick "Stop!" she unwound a long scarf from her neck and shoulders, and gave it, with a wonderfully bright glance, to Giovanni to bind around his left arm.

The action had a double effect, as it was probably intended to have. It released Giovanni from the growing spell, and the look with which Pordenone was favored, at the same time, infuriated the

latter. Miss Bonanette was correct: Pordenone's rage was, perhaps, less likely to be fatal in the fight than his magnetic influence over Giovanni, although to me it seemed that the choice between the two was an exceedingly poor one.

The moment the men were again on guard they sprang upon each other with amazing fury. As I stood spellbound before the writhing forms, Miss Bonanette quietly withdrew the revolver from my hand, and, drawing back the hammer, took up a position close to the struggling men, so close indeed that as they swayed hither and thither she was kept in constant motion, and when, now and again, the combatants stood locked in each other's grasp, still and silent but for their labored breathing, I could hear in the lull the rustling sweep of her train as she moved like a beautiful tigress round the two men fighting to the death. She uttered no word; but the lambent eyes, the poise and tension of the body, and the feline restlessness under excitement, showed how thoroughly the animal passion within her was roused. Had the painter of "*Morituri te Salutant*" seen the look

which transformed her face, he would have selected it from all others as the model for the central female figure, and he would have depicted the merciless upturned thumb in favor of death.

Finally the men broke apart for the first time, both thus far unwounded. As they faced each other again it was evident that Giovanni was in much worse plight than Pordenone. The latter was naturally a very much stronger man, and his strength had been kept up by careful and continued exercise. Giovanni labored under the disadvantage of a strength which was not only originally much inferior, but which had been sapped by long years of unrelieved sedentary occupation.

In the desperate struggle Giovanni, under the inspiration of Miss Bonanette, had exercised all his strength and skill, and the prolonged and unwonted strain had left him breathless and trembling in every limb. In his eyes there was the pitiful look of a man with spent strength going gallantly to his death, while in Pordenone's face there was a mockery and a power which baffles all description. He flashed one taunting glance at Miss Bonanette, as if to say,

"Who can stop me now?" and, I could see, gathered himself in for a headlong spring at his antagonist.

But the stupor which had held me spellbound vanished before the terrible peril of Giovanni, and I sprang to his side to thrust him out of the way. As I did so a pistol-shot rang through the air, and I was hurled headlong through the open door on to the lawn, where I rolled over and over with Pordenone, as I imagined.

But as I clutched my assailant and opened my dazed eyes I found that it was Giovanni and not Pordenone with whom I was entangled. Bounding quickly to my feet, I saw Miss Bonanette, revolver in hand, standing alone in the library; and as I entered the doorway a second shot was fired, of which the leaden missile flew past me in alarming proximity to my head.

"He saw the others coming and has escaped that way," Miss Bonanette called out, indicating the direction with the revolver.

"I tried to stop him with that second shot," she further explained. Giovanni had now gathered himself together and we both rushed toward the belt of

dense shrubbery behind which Pordenone had fled.

The narrative of this encounter has taken a long time in recital, but the occurrences themselves here detailed followed each other in such rapid succession that only a very few minutes had elapsed since the fuse was ignited before Pordenone sprang—unwounded—from the house.

As I turned to run into the shrubbery I could see Mr. Marangilo and Putnam advancing from the rear of the tree on the lawn. Pordenone had also seen them, and with a supreme effort had hurled Giovanni and myself through the doorway in order that he might escape before being again hopelessly hemmed in. In leaving the room he had made his exit by a further door opening on to the shrubbery, so that his flight was not perceived by Putnam or his companion, and it was by the same path which he had gone that Giovanni and I and Miss Bonanette took up the chase.

This walk, we knew, led only to the snake's apartment, and it was resumed from the greenhouses, which formed a continuation of their retreat.

The door of the reptile-house was found to be fastened; and concluding that Pordenone had removed the key from the outside, where it was usually kept, and had, in order to delay pursuit, turned the bolt on the inside, we struggled through the foliage, which was very dense and thorny at that point, in order to gain the path beyond.

Glancing into the reptile's place as we passed, a sight met our gaze which literally froze us to the spot with horror. Pordenone, in his haste to reach the further door, had failed to see the anaconda lying across his path until he had stumbled heavily over it. Had the further door been unlocked, his haste would still have saved him; but Saunders had been very careful to fasten the door, which was the only one by which he and his assistants ever entered the serpent's house.

As already explained, the windows were firmly guarded with a strong iron netting, and Pordenone's only chance of escape now lay in returning through the door, which he had locked and bolted behind him—a simple enough course to pursue had it not been that the angry and still famishing anaconda barred the

way with rage and attack horribly distinct in its attitude and in its threatening eyes.

As we looked in upon the terrible situation Pordenone's escape seemed hopeless, and in face of this new and unaccustomed danger even his amazing courage shrank abashed. But only for a moment. Although the dense black hair on his uncovered head rose like a mane in front of the unwonted horror, Giuseppe Pordenone, whatever his faults, was no coward. The head of the anaconda lay flat on the ground and crept—as oil flows—slowly and almost imperceptibly across the level floor, while the large body twisted its folds in midair behind it, unhasting, unresting.

Pordenone, as we gazed, threw himself at full length on the floor, extending his left arm as a guard to his head. In this way he presented the least desirable point of attack to a snake of the constrictor family, which usually kills by compressure.

The chances were, however, that the attacking blow would fracture Pordenone's skull; and knowing the lightning-like rapidity of the monster's move-

ments, I turned away, sick with apprehension. The sight of Miss Bonanette with the revolver still in her hand, suggested a remedy, however, which, after a fashion, restored my courage.

Pointing to the scene, I extended my hand for the revolver. For a short moment I thought she would refuse me the weapon. But whatever of punishment she might herself unflinchingly inflict, she was, at heart, but a woman, and with a low cry of horror she thrust the revolver into my grasp as she turned away from the unnatural sight and covered her shuddering face with her hands.

It seemed strange to me in that terrible moment that the snake was so long in striking. No doubt the intensity of the horror made the time seem longer than it actually was, but the delay was undoubted, and why was it prolonged after the victim was quiescent and the balance and aim of the hideous projectile adjusted? Was it a refinement of serpentine cruelty to whet its revolting appetite by revelling a while in the anticipatory agonies of its victim, or, stay! was it a condition of anaconda attack that the eye and will of the victim

should be first subjugated? I had heard of the piteous cries which creatures exposed to these reptiles at first emit, and I had heard too that, after a while, they became dumb and apparently incapable of effort, and that unconsciousness in the victim usually preceded the fatal blow.

Turning from the terrible look of the serpent to that of Pordenone, I doubted if the hotbeds or tropic-fens of the Amazon, or even the Ganges, ever raised a reptile which could cow the defiance of those untamable eyes. Glancing from one to the other, there was the same menace and intent in the look of both—a certain family likeness of expression—and the mind hesitated as to which was likely to commence the attack.

Still the chances were in every way unequal; and resting the barrel of my revolver against the ironwork, I took careful aim at the eye of the anaconda.

Simultaneously with the report of the weapon there was a crash of breaking timbers, and the door behind Pordenone flew open under the powerful blows of Giovanni, armed with an axe which he had found in the gardener's toolhouse.

Instantly all was commotion inside. Pordenone sprang to his feet, while the wounded and partially blinded snake thrashed the walls of the house with terrific blows, shivering the glass in all directions.

As Pordenone sprang for the doorway, unmindful of the generous rescue, he seized Giovanni, who still unwittingly barred the way, and threw him violently into the interior of the house, a fact which I only discovered by a piercing scream from Miss Bonanette.

The anaconda, now terribly infuriated, and half-blinded with its own blood, launched itself at Giovanni, and I heard the crash of the bone in the arm which he had raised to defend himself as it splintered before the weight of the blow. As the reptile struck him and imbedded its teeth in his arm the axe dropped from his nerveless grasp, and instantly the den was filled with a perfect whirlwind of revolving snake. Groan after groan burst from poor Giovanni as the animal enfolded him in its terrible clasp with lightning-like rapidity—and answering shriek after shriek rang from Miss Bonanette's lips.

In moments of dire extremity there

is, I have noticed, a certain merciful instinct or judgment which remains to a man even after fright has stampeded both his courage and his reason. That instinct came to my aid now. Seizing the axe, I watched the moment when the shifting body of the snake lengthened for an instant on the floor before further tightening its hold, and aiming at the thickest part, I struck a blow so entirely beyond my strength at ordinary times that it cut through the body of the anaconda as it would have shred its way through a hill of mushrooms. The iron was buried in the writhing body and it had severed the vertebræ. This I could see by the relaxing tension.

As the monster's folds dropped heavily to the floor, releasing Giovanni, the latter fell forward insensible. The snake, though disabled, was not dead; but as it was powerless either to spring again or to crawl out of the way, I had no difficulty in decapitating it, and so ending its power to harm.

The sound of the pistol-shot and of the blows on the door had attracted our other friends, and all of us now gathered over the prostrate, and evidently badly wounded, form of poor Giovanni,

the gentlest, sweetest, and most loyal of mankind.

As Miss Bonanette stooped over his body, I could see the heavy tears drop unchecked from her eyes, and, scarcely knowing why, for the first time that day, I felt a thrill of happiness.

At this point, Putnam somewhat crest-fallen over his undignified retreat from the room, and, perhaps, a little anxious to rehabilitate himself as a good detective, suggested that he and I should follow Pordenone, who, by this time, had gained a start of probably five minutes. The last act of Pordenone, in attempting to throw Giovanni to his death, intensified my desire to secure the murderer, and I readily joined in the pursuit.

As we turned the corner we saw a sight which, even in that day of horrors, chilled our souls anew. In the deep shadow of the shrubbery, her faithful eyes already glazed in death, lay Hector's mate, Cleo, her lifeblood still slowly welling from a wide rent in her breast.

Like the pure bulldog, the well-bred mastiff is almost noiseless, and usually gives or accepts death without a cry,

beyond a low hoarse snarl in the first assault. Cleo had, no doubt, attacked the flying figure of Pordenone, and this was the result. But not without a struggle: the torn turf and dishevelled track showed that for a while a bitter contest had waged.

This induced us to think that Pordenone might not be beyond capture even now.

As we were turning to go, Hector bounded up. As he saw and sniffed the dead body of his companion the look of trouble in his face was pitiful even in a day of great human regrets. But we could not stop, and calling encouragingly to Hector, we ran under the open coach-house into the front grounds of Monkswell.

As we emerged from the postern gate we saw the hansom cab, which we had noticed from the bedroom window, drive off rapidly with, beyond a doubt, Pordenone inside. Instead of returning past the house to drive to Putney, the more convenient railway depot, the cabman had driven off toward Wimbledon station.

Pursuit seemed hopeless, and we were turning back, when a man on

horseback suddenly hove in sight. It was one of the under-grooms, who had been exercising a young horse, and in response to our hasty beckoning he rode up at the gallop.

I was well known to the household, and when I requested him to dismount he readily did so. Mounting hastily, I spurred my charger down the Wimbledon road after the rapidly disappearing cab. As I measured the distance between the hansom and myself, it seemed doubtful if I should ever be able to make it up, as the cab-horse was unusually fleet and the driver was lashing it furiously.

The sight of Hector by my side suggested the possibility of assistance, and stooping down I spoke gently to the noble hound, then urged him on with all the passion I could command. The upturned yellow-brown eyes seemed to speak back to my own with a more than human intelligence: "Yes, one for you"—it was as if they said—"and one for myself," and Hector, pushing forward, soon lessened the distance between himself and the cab.

Before the first milestone was passed, Hector had overtaken the han-


som, and, in spite of the restiveness of my steed, I was not very far behind.

As Hector came up with the cab, his first instinct was to arrest the motive-power, and he accordingly flew at the horse's head. In the impetuosity of his attack he miscalculated the pace, and the impetus of the horse rolled him over on the ground. But only for an instant. He returned to the attack, and only missed the horse because the latter, seeing its danger, threw its head high in the air and swerved to the left.

A stern chase is a long chase, and I could see everything without being able to render my faithful ally any help at all.

Meanwhile, Pordenone, in the cab, had seen the hound and recognized the danger should it succeed in stopping the horse, as it bade fair to do. Throwing back the folding-doors, he crept over the splashboard on to the horse's back, until, with his knees on its sides and his toes on the shafts, he was able to meet the next attack of the mastiff.

This came almost in an instant, and the noble hound fell back from the assault with the rive of a dagger-thrust



which had shorn its way from the fore-paw to the shoulder.

At this juncture two pedestrians could be seen approaching—riflemen going to practice at Wimbledon Butts. The sight was an inspiration to Porde-none. Signaling his driver to stop, he called out to the riflemen: "Shoot that dog, it is mad!" and without waiting further he resumed his furious drive.

The cry of "Mad dog!" is, everywhere, omnipotent — expostulation, protest, agony, are unavailing before it, be it truth or the veriest falsehood; hence it was that, in spite of my frantic efforts, two rifle-shots rang through the air, and the noblest hound that ever breathed stretched himself out and died on the muddy highway close by the sward and yellow broom of Wimbledon Common.

I heard the shots, and I saw, with an outraged soul, the death of my faithful friend, but I heard and saw no more. My horse, young and imperfectly broken, and startled by the flash and report of the rifles right in front, reared and fell over backward, myself underneath. So much I remember, and then all is blank.



CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

WHEN I had time and consciousness to sum up the net results of that direful day, I found them to be—Casualties: Giovanni, a badly broken arm and two fractured ribs from the anaconda's attack; and myself, a dislocated shoulder and a slight brain concussion from the fall of my horse. The latter was not much the worse.

Of my gallant and lovable friend Hector and of Cleo, all that remained had been interred under the green turf of the lawn, at a favorite resting-place beneath a spreading walnut-tree.

For the dead anaconda we had no regrets; but as to the wreckage which accompanied its demise I had some rather painful qualms as I reflected how much I had had to do in introducing the recent tempest into the family.

While I was still confined to my bedroom Mr. Marangilo had consulted his

lawyer as to what it was necessary to do with regard to the body of Mr. Fitzgerald. A coroner's inquest had been held; but as the question of the identification of the remains rested chiefly upon my evidence, and as, moreover, Giovanni, who was also ill, was able to supply an important link in the testimony, the inquest was adjourned for our attendance.

One bright and sunny morning I was able to furnish in person the evidence which I had to offer. Giovanni, although unable to attend in consequence of the nature of his injuries, was sufficiently recovered to give his personal testimony, and the coroner and his jury visited his room to obtain it.

The announcement of the discovery of a murder near Winbledon Common made the usual nine-days' talk, and then the memory of it died out and was forgotten.

The police authorities, nettled at the audacity of such a murder and at being so persistently baffled by Pordenone, offered a large reward for his apprehension, but without result.

A reward for the cabman who carried Pordenone away from Monkswell on

the last occasion brought the latter in person to claim it, but he had nothing of any importance to communicate beyond the fact that he had set down Pordenone at a hatter's in a leading thoroughfare, and that Pordenone had sent out his fare by one of the assistants, so that he did not even know what kind of head-covering he had bought. That information, however, the police discovered for themselves. Amid the hue and cry thus raised the cabman of 1866, who had brought Fitzgerald to Wimbledon and carried back Giovanni, was also unearthed. This was the man whose cab-register poor Giovanni thought was a lucky number for him, and so, perhaps, it was.

From the driver—by a wonderful stretch of memory on his part—the police obtained the address of a house into which Pordenone had entered when he was, unknown to himself, being closely shadowed by Mr. Fitzgerald inside the cab. Coming out of that house, Pordenone had driven straight to Wimbledon in another hansom, returning, as we know, to London by train from Putney.

The house indicated by the cabman

was, to all appearance, deserted. It stood in a neglected garden in the villa district of Saint John's Wood, and was surrounded by a high wall. It had an entrance on the rear upon a secluded and little frequented alley overgrown with grass. It was, of all houses in that vicinity, the one most desirable for secretive purposes, and it had the advantage of being situated in a neighborhood where secrecy does not necessarily imply what the law recognizes as crime, and does not therefore excite suspicion.

A very complete and guarded examination of the rear of these premises revealed the fact that the cottage had by no means been deserted. The weeds and grass round the entrance were considerably worn, and that probably with recent footsteps, and there were other signs of occupancy.

A carefully posted watch was the means of eliciting some valuable information in the course of a week, but nothing was seen of Pordenone. The house, it was found after long and close investigation, was used as a headquarters of the Italian brotherhood, to which reference has already been made in these pages.

Of this brotherhood the burly Barbati was still the recognized chief, and he still administered its laws and penalties with severe and unsparing hand. Of Barbati the police had many suspicions, but they had no crime which they could actually bring home to him, and they allowed him a full length of rope in the way of freedom, trusting that their apparent ignorance and indifference as to his movements might induce him to insert his head in the noose which they had, in their clumsy way, prepared for him.

There is one rather important omission in this narrative which I hasten to supply.

In his hasty flight from the snake-house, Pordenone had sufficient presence of mind to secure his coat and vest, which he had removed for the stiletto contest with Giovanni. He deemed himself, however, too hardly pressed and not sufficiently sure of his ground to penetrate to the farther hall, where he had left his light summer overcoat and hat, and these articles were accordingly left behind, and subsequently handed over to the police.

In looking over the papers connected

with the case, one day at Scotland Yard, I came upon an "exhibit" detailing the effects found in Pordenone's overcoat pocket. "Item: a cigar-case; item: a cigarette-holder; item: a black Maltese cross."

I read no further. This Maltese cross, deemed by the police unworthy of notice beyond the mere record of its existence, probably afforded a clue to Pordenone's disappearance.

A Maltese cross—I recalled the fact clearly—was sent by the Carbonari to any member of the brotherhood who had incurred the death-penalty. The cross was delivered mysteriously three days before the execution of the sentence; and so wide were the ramifications of the society and so certain the fulfilment of the penalty at the stated time that the receipt of the cross usually paralyzed the doomed man so that he became an easy victim.

There now entered a new and vitally significant consideration into our pursuit of Pordenone. It was quite clear that when he visited Monkswell he was under the brotherhood's sentence of death, and this aroused the very natural but hitherto entirely forgotten

inquiry—"What were the reasons which he assigned for visiting Mr. Marangilo on that ill-starred day?"

I took the earliest opportunity of seeing my friend on this subject. In reply to my inquiry, he said that Pordenone had pressed him for a loan of money—said that he was in most desperate need of it—that, in fact, without it he would in all probability lose his life. "And he looked as if he really meant it," added Mr. Marangilo, "and although he had cried 'wolf' so often that it was hard for me to believe anything he said when he wanted money, still, but for the disclosures which had taken place here and Mr. Fitzgerald's murder, I believe that I would have given him what he wanted."

I felt puzzled to understand why Pordenone had not confided to his friend the really desperate position in which he was—under the brotherhood's sentence of death—and this was the cause of my next inquiry.

"If Pordenone had got the Maltese cross of the brotherhood, would he have told you?"

"Oh, no, very certainly not, because he would know that by aiding him in

that case I should be aware that I was compromising myself with the order."

"The cross was found by the police in his overcoat pocket."

As I said this Marangilo's face grew almost livid, and he sat down through sheer weakness in his limbs.

"Why should that concern you? You did him no act of kindness. A child could see that you, and all of us for that matter, did our best to arrest the monster."

"True, true—oh! that is God's own truth," murmured Marangilo through his shaking lips, as he rose in a very dilapidated condition and went to the sideboard to pour himself out a glass of brandy.

After a while I calmed his fears, although his terror of the secret society was still pitiful to witness.

As this was on the occasion of a special visit to Monkswell, I took the opportunity to call and see poor battered and broken Giovanni.

I found him still confined to his room and to his bed. The fractured ribs were getting firm once more, but it was still undesirable to move him from the horizontal position. The compound

som, and, in spite of the restiveness of my steed, I was not very far behind.

As Hector came up with the cab, his first instinct was to arrest the motive-power, and he accordingly flew at the horse's head. In the impetuosity of his attack he miscalculated the pace, and the impetus of the horse rolled him over on the ground. But only for an instant. He returned to the attack, and only missed the horse because the latter, seeing its danger, threw its head high in the air and swerved to the left.

A stern chase is a long chase, and I could see everything without being able to render my faithful ally any help at all.

Meanwhile, Pordenone, in the cab, had seen the hound and recognized the danger should it succeed in stopping the horse, as it bade fair to do. Throwing back the folding-doors, he crept over the splashboard on to the horse's back, until, with his knees on its sides and his toes on the shafts, he was able to meet the next attack of the mastiff.

This came almost in an instant, and the noble hound fell back from the assault with the rive of a dagger-thrust

which had shorn its way from the fore-paw to the shoulder.

At this juncture two pedestrians could be seen approaching—riflemen going to practice at Wimbledon Butts. The sight was an inspiration to Porde-none. Signaling his driver to stop, he called out to the riflemen: "Shoot that dog, it is mad!" and without waiting further he resumed his furious drive.

The cry of "Mad dog!" is, everywhere, omnipotent — expostulation, protest, agony, are unavailing before it, be it truth or the veriest falsehood; hence it was that, in spite of my frantic efforts, two rifle-shots rang through the air, and the noblest hound that ever breathed stretched himself out and died on the muddy highway close by the sward and yellow broom of Wimbledon Common.

I heard the shots, and I saw, with an outraged soul, the death of my faithful friend, but I heard and saw no more. My horse, young and imperfectly broken, and startled by the flash and report of the rifles right in front, reared and fell over backward, myself underneath. So much I remember, and then all is blank.



CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

WHEN I had time and consciousness to sum up the net results of that direful day, I found them to be—Casualties: Giovanni, a badly broken arm and two fractured ribs from the anaconda's attack; and myself, a dislocated shoulder and a slight brain concussion from the fall of my horse. The latter was not much the worse.

Of my gallant and lovable friend Hector and of Cleo, all that remained had been interred under the green turf of the lawn, at a favorite resting-place beneath a spreading walnut-tree.

For the dead anaconda we had no regrets; but as to the wreckage which accompanied its demise I had some rather painful qualms as I reflected how much I had had to do in introducing the recent tempest into the family.

While I was still confined to my bedroom Mr. Marangilo had consulted his

lawyer as to what it was necessary to do with regard to the body of Mr. Fitzgerald. A coroner's inquest had been held; but as the question of the identification of the remains rested chiefly upon my evidence, and as, moreover, Giovanni, who was also ill, was able to supply an important link in the testimony, the inquest was adjourned for our attendance.

One bright and sunny morning I was able to furnish in person the evidence which I had to offer. Giovanni, although unable to attend in consequence of the nature of his injuries, was sufficiently recovered to give his personal testimony, and the coroner and his jury visited his room to obtain it.

The announcement of the discovery of a murder near Winbledon Common made the usual nine-days' talk, and then the memory of it died out and was forgotten.

The police authorities, nettled at the audacity of such a murder and at being so persistently baffled by Pordenone, offered a large reward for his apprehension, but without result.

A reward for the cabman who carried Pordenone away from Monkswell on

the last occasion brought the latter in person to claim it, but he had nothing of any importance to communicate beyond the fact that he had set down Pordenone at a hatter's in a leading thoroughfare, and that Pordenone had sent out his fare by one of the assistants, so that he did not even know what kind of head-covering he had bought. That information, however, the police discovered for themselves. Amid the hue and cry thus raised the cabman of 1866, who had brought Fitzgerald to Wimbledon and carried back Giovanni, was also unearthed. This was the man whose cab-register poor Giovanni thought was a lucky number for him, and so, perhaps, it was.

From the driver—by a wonderful stretch of memory on his part—the police obtained the address of a house into which Pordenone had entered when he was, unknown to himself, being closely shadowed by Mr. Fitzgerald inside the cab. Coming out of that house, Pordenone had driven straight to Wimbledon in another hansom, returning, as we know, to London by train from Putney.

The house indicated by the cabman

was, to all appearance, deserted. It stood in a neglected garden in the villa district of Saint John's Wood, and was surrounded by a high wall. It had an entrance on the rear upon a secluded and little frequented alley overgrown with grass. It was, of all houses in that vicinity, the one most desirable for secretive purposes, and it had the advantage of being situated in a neighborhood where secrecy does not necessarily imply what the law recognizes as crime, and does not therefore excite suspicion.

A very complete and guarded examination of the rear of these premises revealed the fact that the cottage had by no means been deserted. The weeds and grass round the entrance were considerably worn, and that probably with recent footsteps, and there were other signs of occupancy.

A carefully posted watch was the means of eliciting some valuable information in the course of a week, but nothing was seen of Pordenone. The house, it was found after long and close investigation, was used as a headquarters of the Italian brotherhood, to which reference has already been made in these pages.

Northern moors the dewy heather beneath my feet and hear the whirr of the Scottish grouse in my ears.

Business had prospered with me, and the bank which I represented had decided to build more commodious premises on the site of the old establishment. As I resided over the bank, this arrangement caused me to remove to other quarters, and I took rooms in a hotel in the Strand near Charing Cross, pending the completion of the new building.

I spent the most of my evenings at home in the hotel and found much quiet instruction in studying with curious eyes from my window the strange panorama of humanity which rolled like a great sea of active life beneath my eyes.

After a time, I began to note the regularity of the ebb and flow of the vast human tide, and to distinguish the different characters of its living freight. I learned to classify the strange burden of its flotsam and jetsam and to time its appearance, and even, here and there, to identify the waifs which drifted aimlessly backward and forward, hugging, more with instinct than intelli-

I

gence, each shaded corner or crevice of the street as they did so.

Some of these were so utterly devoid of purpose and had so little of vitality in them that they suggested at times the idea of dead people who had not yet rid themselves entirely of a certain dismal habit of living, and this semi-diurnal tide of cruel-hearted London seemed to play with them and to carry them out and in, as the ocean toys with its victims—bearing them out to sea, then bringing them back again and again, to revolt us with their ever-increasing loathsomeness.

Few ocean-beds are things of beauty at low tide; and, to continue the parallelism employed, London is no exception. No receding current ever laid bare more painful spectacles and no more hideous crustaceans ever came out from the ooze and slime of an earthly shore to batten on the dregs of the ocean's floor than scuttled out in the midnight darkness from the hidden nooks and crannies of London when all the tide of reputable humanity had withdrawn.

Then, indeed, London seemed to me to become a something unspeakable

and unholy—a land of Idumea given up to the repulsive creatures of darkness—a repulsive mummary of life.

New York leaves much to be desired in its midnight aspect; and even artistic though voluptuous Paris at that unseasonable hour disappoints one, but London alone, of all cities, is brutal and brutish in its midnight dress. The shade and fetid breath of its dark and narrow streets favor a fungoid growth which could not exist in the broad and well-lighted streets of New York.

Among the poor who drifted backward and forward daily were one or two in whom I began to feel a certain degree of interest. These belonged to the tribe of itinerant venders of small wares at the street-corners: a class not usually conspicuous for the decency or circumspection of its life.

I had oftentimes marked from my window the bent and tottering figure of an aged man being led to his nightly post by a slender, dark-eyed boy. The strange pair apparently eked out a living by selling matches in the streets near the *Café Gatti*. Punctually at seven each evening the boy led the old man to his accustomed place, which,

with equal punctuality, they left at midnight.

On one or two occasions I invested small sums with the boy, for the old man, in addition to being blind, was apparently deaf and dumb. At these times I endeavored to draw the boy into conversation, and little by little I learned that the two had not been long in the country, and that the old man—who was the boy's grandfather—had lost his eyesight while blasting rock in an Italian quarry, and that the shock of the explosion had destroyed his hearing and, in course of time, his power of speech.

The figure of the old man was now bent with age, and the long white beard which swept his breast added to his apparent years; but there were still unmistakable evidences of vast strength in the broad back and muscular shoulders of the aged stonecutter.

I mentioned my interest in this old man to Mr. Marangilo and to Miss Bonanette, and between us we made up a little purse for him. In handing this to the boy I mentioned the names of my two friends. He hesitated before taking it, but finally gave it to his grand-

father. When the latter's fingers felt the purse his scarred features became distorted with rage and he threw the money violently on the ground.

The boy, too, drew himself up and said: "Sir, we are not beggars; you ought not to have done this." The look in the boy's face was, however, apologetic, although his words were not. The whole thing was an enigma to me, who understood that match-selling was usually only a cloak for mendicancy.

When I related the result of our charitable intentions, both my friends agreed that it was very strange—Italians were not usually so sensitive on such points.

London was now, to use the common holiday expression, "empty." Every one who could get away was out of town, and I could not recall a single friend who had not left. During the growing tedium I encouraged Putnam's visits, as he had usually an ample supply of interesting talk on hand.

He still kept up his Saint John's Wood visits, and he said he had ascertained that among the Carbonari brotherhood there was a considerable admiration for Pordenone; more especially at the way

in which he had baffled all their efforts to kill him, and at his master stroke in blinding the man told off for that purpose, and that man, of all others, the terrible Barbati.

Putnam thought that but for the strictness of their laws the brotherhood would have offered Pordenone an amnesty, and after imposing certain discipline, have elected him chief, in Barbati's place, so enchanted were they with the courage and address of the recreant brother.

Putnam regarded this result as not unlikely even then, notwithstanding their laws, as the order wanted a bold and skilful leader at that time in London.

One night, while I was enjoying my after-dinner cigar, Putnam entered in a state of considerable elation. He had, he said, received information from a reliable source that Pordenone would visit the *Café Gatti* that evening—in disguise, of course.

This piece of stirring news dissipated my growing *ennui*, and, as the hour named for Pordenone's visit was already near, I prepared to accompany Putnam to the café. As we crossed the street

toward the restaurant I saw the old Italian and his grandson at their customary post. The boy's sharp eyes had seen me first, and he gave a brief salute, in intimation of his good will I presumed, and to show that he did not bear any malice for my blundering charity.

Once again we took our old seat in the café and arranged the special points which we should individually watch. Putnam, I ought to say, was effectually disguised. Two hours of burning impatience passed; and when the clock marked 11.30 we felt with bitter chagrin that we must chronicle another disappointment. As I was about to rise to my feet and to leave the restaurant, I gave a last glance through the vast saloon, with its interminable multiplications in the mirrors which lined its walls. As I did so I became suddenly conscious of the keen scrutiny of a pair of eyes reflected from one of the mirrors. Instantly, on meeting my gaze, the other was withdrawn, and the person turned away. Measuring the angle of the reflection with my glance, I examined hastily that portion of the room where the owner of the eyes must be. To my

surprise, I could see no one at all resembling the reflection. At a distance of perhaps fifty feet there was a screen placed to give a little more privacy to one particular dinner-table. Although I could no longer see the reflection, I felt certain that the object of my search must be behind the screen.

The man who had been watching us was, I had no doubt, Pordenone. Asking Putnam to call the waiter, so as to be in readiness to go, I walked forward to the screen, only to find the table behind it vacant. Now, where *could* Pordenone have gone?

There was absolutely no exit from the café except past our table, and no one who had left had escaped our scrutiny. I returned to my table puzzled and uncertain what to do. I found that, in spite of Putnam's remonstrances, my seat had been occupied by an elderly gentleman wearing smoke-colored glasses.

The waiter had offered the new arrival another seat, but he failed to comprehend, and was too busy with a wheezy, asthmatical cough to pay much heed to him. Finally, in a strangulated and husky voice, he managed to give

his order for a glass of hot lemonade to the waiter, and having slowly consumed the refreshment, he rose to leave, giving us, as he did so, a parting bow of great depth, and, if we might judge without seeing the hidden eyes, of much sarcasm.

As he was passing through the door he turned quickly, and seeing our gaze still fixed upon him, he removed his colored glasses with his right hand and showed us the hateful eyes of the murderer, Pordenone, flaming unutterable scorn and derision toward us.

The identity was apparent to both Putnam and myself on the instant, and we rose hastily to follow. As we passed out of the café we could see Pordenone crossing the street. He was in no apparent hurry, and yet he must have been aware that we were following him. The street was empty for the moment but for the pursuers and the pursued, and the old match-seller and his boy. As the latter saw Pordenone crossing the street he seemed to recognize a possible customer, and he left the old man's side to run and meet Pordenone, walking back toward his grandfather, side by side with Pordenone.

As Pordenone reached the blind

match-seller there rose suddenly a hoarse and awful cry on the night air, a cry which made my very heart stand still with horror. With the first note of that terrible cry, the blind man had launched himself at Pordenone and had enveloped him in his long tentacle-like arms. Pordenone was taken by surprise—absolutely so; and before the jeering expression which he had carried with him from the café had died out of his eyes, the dagger of the blind man was buried in his heart.

But even thus, at such desperate odds, the battle was not altogether against him. Clutching with desperate grasp the dagger-hand of his slayer so as to hold the weapon in its place, he managed as he reeled to draw his own stiletto and to leave it, with a mocking laugh as he fell, buried to the hilt in the blind man's breast. The sound of the laugh was still in his throat when he died on the pavement.

As I stooped over Pordenone, Putnam raised the head of the blind man, over whom the Italian boy was shedding bitter tears. Presently my attention was attracted by a low ejaculation of surprise from Putnam.

In the struggle the wounded man's hat had fallen off and the long white beard had become displaced, and as Putnam removed the disguise, he had uncovered the mutilated but well-known face of Luigi Barbati, the chief of the Carbonari. He still lived, and falteringly, but distinctly, came the question from between his bloodless lips, "Is he dead?"

On being answered in the affirmative, a smile flickered for a moment across his face, and then he became unconscious. Pordenone's dying thrust had missed its mark by a hair's breadth. The blow had not killed Barbati at once, but it was evident that he was bleeding internally—probably bleeding to death.

Two policemen had now come up, and one of them was engaged making notes of the disposition of the bodies, while the other was stooping over Pordenone, from whose breast still stood out the black Maltese cross which formed the handle to Barbati's dagger. The dying man and the dead body were placed on stretchers and taken, the one to the police station, the other to the hospital in the immediate vicinity.

The surgeon in attendance declared

Barbati to be dying from internal hemorrhage; and this being intimated to the wounded man, he signified his desire to make an *ante mortem* statement. Of that statement the only portion which concerns the readers of these pages is the fact that the man whom he had killed had betrayed his sister under the guise of a fictitious marriage.

That the latter was invalid had only been discovered by Barbati subsequent to 1866; and as he worshipped his only sister he had determined that the penalty of Pordenone's perfidy should be death, and by *his* hand. It was for this reason that he had volunteered to carry out the sentence of the Carbonari, in attempting to do which for the first time he had lost his eyesight.

In dwelling upon the irreparable wrong done his sister and in the ruin wrought to his own life by Pordenone's destruction of his sight, it is possible that the passions of his fierce Italian nature, suppressed as they were, had to some extent unhinged his intellect. It is charitable to suppose so; and but for this reflection I should hesitate to place on record the monstrous fact that by a diabolical and unintelligible refinement

of cruelty he had employed Pordenone's own child—his sister's son—to identify him so that he might murder him. . . .

The meeting which took place at Monkswell shortly after Pordenone's death was in every way one to be remembered with pleasure. The double crime, while eliciting the fact that Miss Bonanette had been legitimately married to Pordenone, had also done her the additional service of ridding her of her unworthy husband. The establishment of the legality of her union rehabilitated her in her own esteem and restored the full pride of her womanhood, and Pordenone's timely death swept every fear of the future from her mind.

Giovanni heard the good news in silence, but his eyes gleamed with an unwonted lustre as he followed with delicate touch the traceries of his wonderful goblet. But a feeling of delicacy made him keep aloof from Monkswell, and he was not present at the first gathering of those interested in Pordenone's fate.

He called upon me at my rooms in the hotel and explained that he did not wish to appear to take undue advantage of the change in Miss Bonanette's posi-

tion, or to avail himself of any kindly sentiment which circumstances had aroused in his favor in the mind of Miss Bonanette—or rather (hateful name) “Madame Pordenone.”

While he was speaking I ordered a hansom cab, and in a few minutes we were bowling along toward Victoria station *en route* for Wimbledon.

Giovanni's arrival at Monkswell was the cause of much rejoicing, and in the soft glow of welcome in Miss Bonanette's eyes I recognized an omen of future happiness for our gentle friend—an omen which, I have only to add, the future abundantly confirmed.

THE END.



J. SELWIN TAIT & SONS'

Latest Publications.



Fifty Thousand Dollars Ransom

By DAVID MALCOLM, author of "A Fiend Incarnate." 16mo, Cloth, Gilt Top. Price 75 cents.

A splendid story, the interest of which begins with the first paragraph and increases with every page until the end. It describes the adventures of John Granger, the staid business man; of his beautiful wife, and of the dazzling Gilbert Monaghan who suddenly injects himself into their lives. There is plot and counterplot, and excitement without end, although the limits of the probable are never exceeded.

No writer of the present day holds the reader's attention so closely as this new author.

The Major's Favorite

By JOHN STRANGE WINTER, author of "Bootles' Baby," "The Soul of the Bishop," "A Seventh Child," etc. 16mo, Cloth. Price 75 cents.

This is the latest novel of this popular author, and possesses every charm for which her works are celebrated.







